



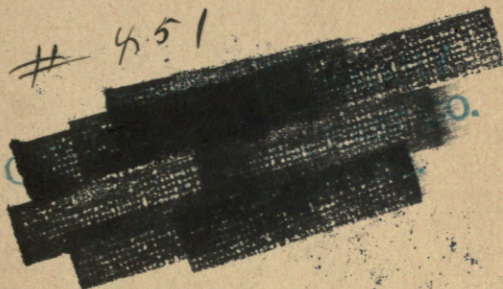
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Pelda Mason





**HER HUSBAND'S PURSE**

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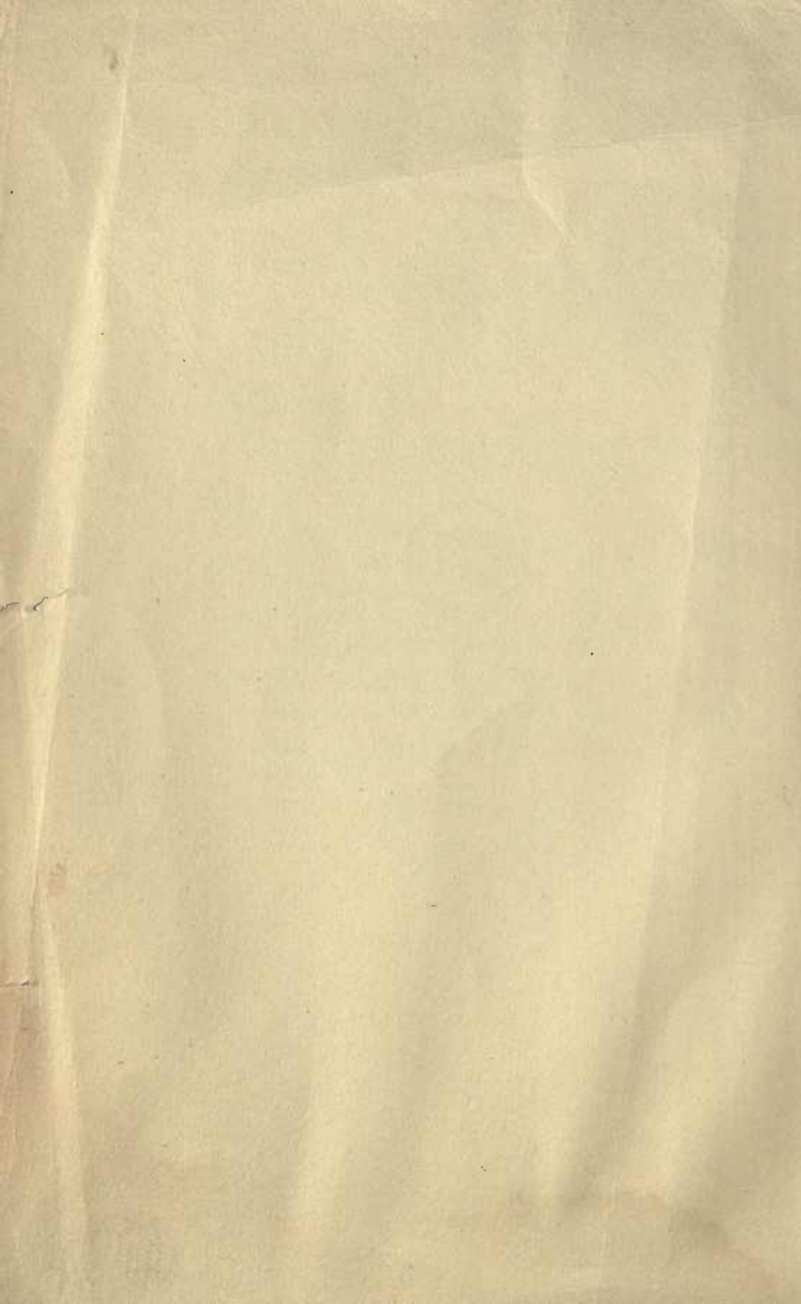
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WARREN HYDE

WHEN HALF-GODS GO



THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS  
GARDEN CITY, N. Y.













“Oh!” her voice rippled with laughter, “this is the twentieth century A. D., not B. C., Daniel”



# HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

BY  
HELEN R. MARTIN

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ILLUSTRATED BY  
JOHN NEWTON HOWITT

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GARDEN CITY      NEW YORK  
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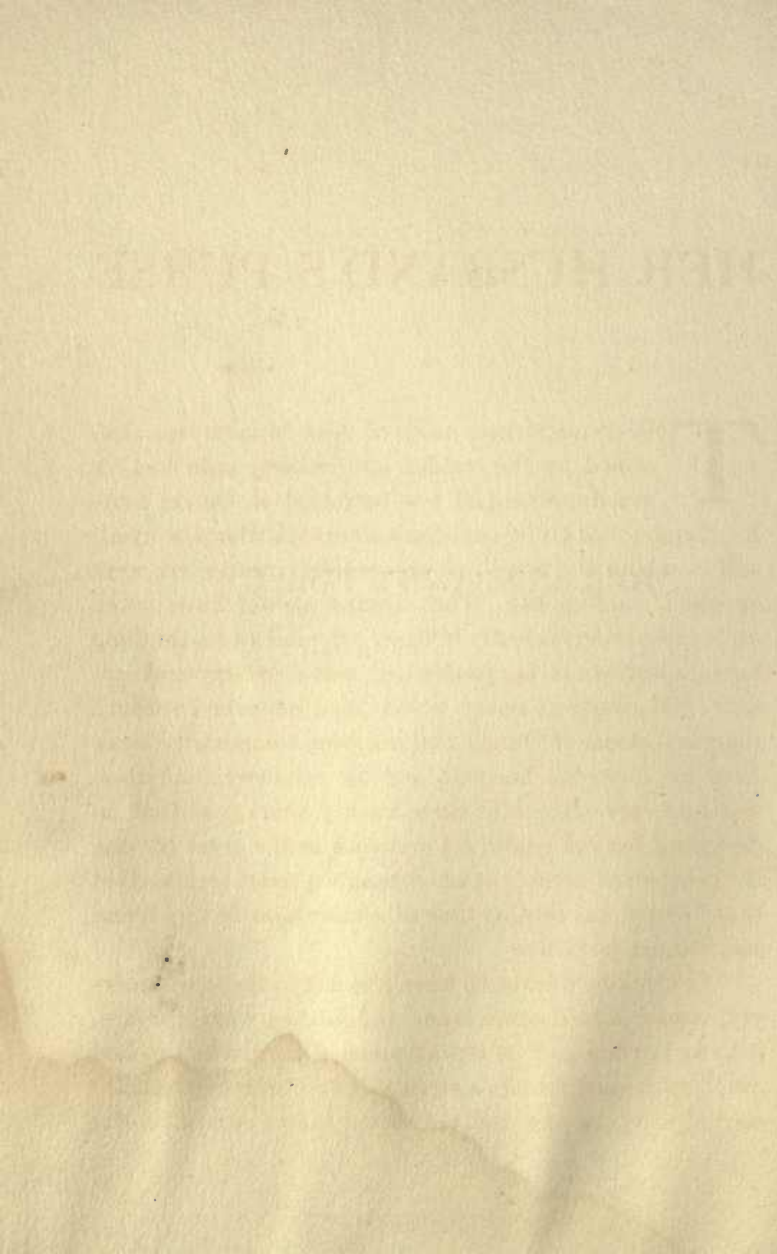
## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

“Oh!” her voice rippled with laughter, “this is the twentieth century A. D., not B. C., Daniel” (see page 180) . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
“‘Benefactor’?” she read, “‘a doer of kindly deeds; a friendly helper.’ You see, I’m <i>your</i> benefactor, according to the Standard” . . .	50
Margaret suddenly laid down her napkin and rushed from the room, every nerve in her sick and quivering with the physical and moral disgust she felt . . . . .	220
“You will be glad to know, Jennie, that I have persuaded mother to spend the night with us,” Margaret said . . . . .	272





**HER HUSBAND'S PURSE**



# HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

## I

THE Pennsylvania town of New Munich was electrified by the sudden and entirely unlooked-for announcement of the betrothal of Daniel Leit-  
zel, Esquire; but his two maiden sisters with whom he lived, and to whom the news was also wholly unexpected, were appalled, confounded. That Danny should have taken such a step independently of them (who did all his thinking for him outside of his profession) was a cataclysmal episode. Of course it never would have happened without their knowledge if Danny had not been temporarily away from his home on business and far removed from their watchful care—watchful these twenty years past that no designing Jezebel might get a chance at the great fortune of their petted little brother—though it must be admitted that Danny was by this time of a marriageable age, being just turned forty-five.

“To think he’d leave us learn about it in the newspapers yet, sooner ’n he’d come home and face us with it! Yes, it looks anyhow as if he was ashamed of the girl he’s picked out!” exclaimed Jennie, a stern and uncompromising spinster of sixty, as she and her sister Sadie, sitting in the

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

elaborately furnished and quite hideous sitting-room of their big, fine house on Main Street, stared in consternation at the glaring headlines of the New Munich *Evening Intelligencer*, which announced, in type that to the sisters seemed letters of flame, the upsetting news of their idolized brother having been at last matrimonially trapped. Being confronted with his betrothal in print seemed to make it hopelessly incontrovertible. They might have schemed to avert the impending catastrophe of his marriage (in case Danny *had* been taken in by an Adventuress) did not the *Intelligencer* unequivocally state (and the *Intelligencer's* statements were scarcely less authoritative to Jennie and Sadie Leitzel than the Bible itself) that Danny would be married to the Unknown inside of a month. If the *Intelligencer* said so, it seemed useless to try to stop it.

"To think he'll be married to her already before we get a chance, once, to look her over and tell him if she'd suit him!" lamented Sadie who was five years younger than Jennie.

"Well," pronounced Jennie, setting her thin lips in a hard line, "she'll find out when she gets here that she ain't getting her fingers on our Danny's money! She'll get fooled if she's counting on *that*. She'll *soon* learn that she'll have to do with just what he likes to give her and no more! And of course Danny'll consult *us* as to just how much he ought to leave her handle. When she finds out," Jennie grimly prophesied, "that our Danny always does the way we advise him to and that she'll have to keep on the right side of *us*, I guess she won't like it very well!"



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"We can only hope that she ain't such a bold, common thing that just took our Danny in, that way!" sighed Sadie.

"But why would he hurry it up so, like as if he was afraid we would mebbly put a stop to it? *She* put him up to fixing it all tight before he could change his mind!" Jennie shrewdly surmised.

"It does look that way!" fretted Sadie.

Jennie, the elder sister, was tall, gaunt, and rawboned. Though approaching old age, her dominating spirit and grasping ambitions had preserved her vigour, physically and mentally. Her sharp face was deeply lined, but the keenness of her eyes was undimmed, her shoulders were erect, her hair was thick and black. The expression of her thin slit of a mouth was almost relentlessly hard.

Sadie, five years younger, had also a will of her own, but happily it had always operated on a line so entirely in harmony with that of her sister, that they had lived together all their lives without friction, the younger woman unconsciously dominated by the elder. Indeed, no one could abide under the same roof with Jennie Leitzel who ventured openly to differ with her. Fortunately, even Sadie's passion for dress did not clash with Jennie's miserliness, for Sadie, too, was miserly, and Jennie loved to see her younger sister arrayed gorgeously in cheap finery, her taste inclining to that of a girl of sixteen. A dormant mother-instinct, too, such as must exist, however obscurely, in every frame of woman, even in that of a Jennie Leitzel, found an outlet in coddling Sadie's health and in ministering to and encouraging a certain plaintiveness in the

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

younger woman's disposition. So, these two sisters, depending upon and complementing each other, of congenial temperaments, and with but one common paramount interest in life, the welfare of their incomparable younger brother whom they had brought up and of whom they were inordinately proud, lived together in the supreme enjoyment of the high estate to which their ambitions and their unflagging efforts had uplifted the Leitzel family—from rural obscurity to prominence and influence in their county town of New Munich.

To be sure, the sisters realized that they held what they called their "social position" only as appendages to Danny—Danny who had been to college, who was the head of a great corporation law firm, who was enormously rich and a highly eligible young man; that is, he used to be young; and though New Munich regarded him as a confirmed old bachelor, his sisters still looked upon him as a dashing youth and a great matrimonial prize. They were not ashamed, but proud, of the fact that people tolerated them because they were Danny's sisters.

It may seem strange that anything calling itself "society" could admit women so crude as Jennie and Sadie, even though they were appendages to a bait so dazzling as Danny Leitzel, Esquire. But in communities where the ruling class is descended from the Pennsylvania Dutch, "society" is remarkably elastic and has almost no closed doors to the appeal of wealth, however freighted it may be with vulgarity and illiteracy; and, be it known, Danny's sisters were not only financially independent of Danny, but even wealthy, quite in their own right.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

In spite of this fact, however, what social footing they had in the little town of New Munich had not been acquired so easily as to make it appear to them other than a very great possession.

As to the big, fine house in which they lived, it had been Danny's money which, in the early days of his prosperity, had, at his sisters' instigation, built this grand dwelling on the principal street of New Munich, to dazzle and catch the town.

The room in which the sisters sat to-night would have seemed to one who knew them a perfect expression of themselves—its tawdry grandeur speaking loudly of their pride in money and display, and of, at the same time, their penuriousness; the absence of books and of real pictures, but the obtrusive decorations of heavy gilt frames on chromos; the luridly coloured domestic carpets; heavy, ugly upholstered furniture, manifesting the unfortunate combination of ample means with total absence of culture. It would seem that in a rightly organized social system women like these would not possess wealth, but would be serving those who knew how to use wealth.

"To think our Danny'd marry a stranger, yet, from away down South, when he could have picked out Congressman Ocksreider's daughter, or Judge Kuntz's oldest girl—or Mamie Gundaker and her father a bank president! Any of these high ladies of New Munich he could have!" wailed Sadie. "They'd be only too glad to *get* our Danny! And here he goes and marries a stranger!"

"It ain't *like* him that he'd up and do this thing

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

behind our backs, without askin' our advice!" Jennie exclaimed.

"Think of the grand wedding we could have had here in New Munich!" Sadie sighed.

"And we don't even know if she's well-fixed or poor!" cried Jennie in a wildly worried tone.

"But I hardly think," Sadie tried to comfort her, "that Danny would pick out a *poor* girl. Nor a common one, either, so genteel as what we raised him!"

"But men get so easy fooled with women, Sadie! If she's smart, she could easy come over Danny."

"Unless he got stubborn-headed for her."

"Well," admitted Jennie, "to be sure Danny can get awful stubborn-headed sometimes. But if she's smart and found out how rich he is, she'd take care not to get him stubborn-headed."

"Yes, that's so, too," nodded Sadie. "I wonder if she's a fancy dresser?"

Sadie's love of clothes was second only to her devotion to Danny. She was dressed this evening in a girlish Empire gown made of red cheesecloth.

"What will folks *say* to this news, anyhow?" scolded Jennie. "I'll have a shamed face to go on the street, us not knowing anything about it, not even who she is yet! If folks ast us, Sadie, we must leave on we did know—we'll just say, 'Oh, it ain't news to *us*!'"

"But how could we know much when Danny himself has knew her only a little over a month, Jennie?"

"Yes, don't it, now, beat all?"

"Yes, don't it!"



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"That shows what she is—marrying a man she knew only a month or so!"

"Well, to be sure, it wouldn't take her even a month, Jennie, to see what a catch our Danny is."

"If she does turn out to be a common person," said Jennie with her most purse-proud look and tone, "she's anyhow got to act genteel before folks and not give Danny and us a shamed face here in New Munich—high up as we've raised our Danny and hard as we worked to do it yet!"

"Yes, the idea!" mourned Sadie.

"Yes, the very idea!" nodded Jennie vindictively. "I shouldn't wonder," she added anxiously, always concerned for her sister's health which was really quite remarkably perfect, "if this shock give you the headache, Sadie!"

"I shouldn't wonder!" Sadie shook her head sadly.

"Read me off the piece in the paper and see what it says all," Jennie ordered. "But sit so the light don't give you the headache."

Sadie, adjusting her spectacles and turning on the electric table lamp at her elbow, read the glaring article which had that evening appeared on the first page of their daily paper and which every household in New Munich was, they knew, now reading with feelings of astonishment, curiosity, disappointment or chagrin, as the case might be, for the sisters were sure that many heartaches among the marriageable maidens of the town would be caused by the news that Danny was no longer within their possible reach. These twenty-five years past he and his gold had



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

been dangling before them—and now to have him appropriated, without warning, by a non-resident!

The article was headed in large type:

**“ONE MORE VICTIM OF CUPID’S DARTS—  
DANIEL LEITZEL LED LIKE A LAMB  
TO HYMEN’S ALTAR.”**

Sadie breathed heavily as she read:

In a communication received at this office to-day from our esteemed fellow-citizen, Daniel Leitzel, Esquire, sojourning for the past four weeks in the balmy South, we are informed of his engagement and impending marriage to “a young lady of distinguished Southern lineage,” one who, we may feel sure, will grace very acceptably the social circle here of which Mr. Leitzel is such a prominent, prosperous, and pleasant member. The news comes to our town as a great surprise, for we had almost begun to give Danny up as a hopeless bach. He will, however, lead his bride to Hymen’s altar early next month and bring her straightway to his palatial residence on Main Street, presided over by his estimable sisters, Miss Jennie and Miss Sadie. New Munich offers its congratulations to her esteemed fellow-citizen, though some of us wonder why he found it necessary to go so far away to find a wife, with so many lovely ladies here in his native town to choose from. Love, however, we all know, is a capricious mistress and none may guess whither she may lead.

The happy and fortunate lady, Miss Margaret Berkeley of Berkeley Hill, a distinguished and picturesque old colonial homestead two miles out of Charleston,

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

S. C., is, we are informed, a lineal descendant on her mother's side of two governors of her native state and the niece of the learned scholar and eminent psychologist, the late Dr. Osmond Berkeley, with whom Miss Margaret made her home at Berkeley Hill until his decease a year ago, since which sad event she has continued to reside at this same homestead, her married sister and family living with her, this sister being the wife of a Charleston attorney with whom Daniel Leitzel, Esquire, has been conducting some legal railroad business in Charleston and through whom our esteemed fellow-citizen, it seems, met his happy doom.

New Munich's most aristocratic society will anticipate with pleasurable interest the arrival of the happy bride and groom, Mrs. and Mr. Daniel Leitzel. No doubt many very elegant society events will take place this winter in honour of the newcomer among us; for New Munich is noted for its hospitality.

"It don't say," Jennie sharply remarked, "whether she's well-fixed—though to be sure if she comes from such high people they'd have to be rich."

"But her grand relations are all deceased, the paper says," returned Sadie despondently. "You may better believe, Jennie, if she had money, Danny would have told the noospapers."

"It says in the paper she's living with her married sister, and it looks to me," Jennie shrewdly surmised, "as if her brother-in-law (that lawyer Danny had dealings with) wanted to get rid of her and worked her off on our Danny. Or else that she took up with Danny to get a home of her own."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Do you *think* Danny could be so easy worked?" Sadie doubtfully inquired.

"He's a man," Jennie affirmed conclusively (though there were those among Danny's acquaintances who would not have agreed with Jennie); "and any man can be worked."

"You think?"

"To be sure. Danny would have been roped in long ago a'ready if I hadn't of opened his eyes to it, still, when he was being worked."

"Yes, I guess," agreed Sadie. "Say, Jennie, what'll Hiram say when he hears it, I wonder!"

Hiram was their brother next in age to Jennie, who, upon the family's sudden, unexpected access to wealth thirty-five years before, through the discovery of coal on some farm land they owned, had been a young farmer working in the fields, and had immediately decided to use his share of the money obtained from leasing the coal land to prepare himself for what had then seemed to him a dizzy height of ambition, the highest human calling, the United Brethren ministry. For twenty years now he had been pastor of a small church in the neighbouring borough of Millerstown. His sisters were very proud to have a brother who was "a preacher." It was so respectable. They never failed to feel a thrill at sight of his printed name in an occasional number of the *Millerstown New Era*—"Rev. Hiram Leitzel." But Hiram did not, of course, hold Danny's high place in their regard; Danny, their little brother whom they had reared and who had repaid them by such a successful career in money-making

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

that he had, at the age of forty-five, accumulated a fortune many times larger than that he had inherited.

"Hiram will take it awful hard that Danny's getting married," affirmed Jennie. "He'd like you and me and Danny, too, to will our money to *his* children. He always hoped, I think, that Danny wouldn't ever get married, so's his children would get all. To be sure the ministry ain't a money-making calling and Hiram has jealous feelings over Danny that he's so rich and keeps getting richer. Hiram likes money, too, as much as Danny does."

"I wonder," speculated Sadie, "if Danny's picked out as saving and hard-working a wife as what Hiram's got."

The characteristic Leitzel caution that Hiram had exercised in "picking out" a wife had prolonged his bachelorhood far into middle life. He had now been married ten years and had four children.

Keenly as the Leitzels loved money, none of them, not even Hiram himself, had ever regretted his going into the ministry. It gave him the kind of importance in the little borough of Millerstown that was manna to the Leitzel egotism. Hiram really thought of himself (as in his youth he had always looked upon ministers) as a kind of demigod; and as the people of Millerstown and even his own wife treated him as though he were one, he lived in the complacent enjoyment of his delusion.

He had greatly pleased his sisters and his brother Daniel by marrying the daughter of the richest man in his congregation, and they all approved of the frugality by which he and his wife managed to live on the little salary he drew



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

from his church, letting his inherited wealth and that of his wife accumulate for the children.

"It ain't likely," Jennie replied to Sadie's speculation, "that Danny's marrying as well as Hiram married, when he's acting without our advice."

"No, I guess anyhow not," agreed Sadie. "Say, Jennie!" she suddenly whispered mysteriously.

"Well, what?"

"Will we leave Mom know about Danny's getting married?"

"Well, to be sure she'll have to find it out," Jennie curtly answered. "It'll mebbby be printed in the *County Gazette* and she sees that sometimes."

"Say, Jennie, if Danny's wife *is* a way-up lady, what'll she think of Mom yet, with her New Mennonite garb and her Dutch talk that way, and all! My goodness!"

"Well, a body can't help for their step-mothers, I guess!"

"But she's so wonderful common and ignorant. I guess Danny would be ashamed to leave his wife see her. And his wife would laugh so at her clothes and her talk!"

"But how would his wife ever get a chance to see her? We don't ever have Mom in here and we never take any one out to see her."

"That's so, too," Sadie acquiesced.

"I guess Hiram'll press it more'n ever now that we'd ought to put Mom to the poorhouse and rent our old home. The land would bring a good rent, he says, and we've no call to leave her live on it free any longer. But I tell Hiram it would make talk if we put her to the poor-



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

house. Hardly any one knows we *got* a step-mother, and we don't want to start any talk."

"Yes, well, but how could they blame us when she ain't our own mother?" Sadie protested.

"But *you* know how she brags about us so proud to her neighbours out there in Martz Township—just as if we *was* her own sons and daughters—and tells 'em how grand we live and how much Danny is thought of and how smart he is and what fine sermons Hiram preaches and how she kep' us all when we were little while Pop drank so and we hadn't anything but what she earned at the wash-tub! Yes," said Jennie indignantly, "she tells it all right out perfectly shameless and anybody to hear her talk would think we was her own flesh and blood!"

"Yes, it often worries me the way the folks out there talk down on us and say she always treated us like her own and we always treated her like a *step-mother*!" fretted Sadie.

"Well, I guess *we* needn't mind what such common, poor country folks say about *us*!" sneered Jennie. "All the same"—she suddenly lowered her voice apprehensively—"we darsent start folks talking, or first thing we know they'll be saying we *cheated* Mom out of her widow's third because she was too ignorant to claim it!"

"How would they have dare to say that when the land come from our own mother in the first place?" pleaded Sadie. "And Danny always says we've got our moral right to all the money even if we haven't the legal right."

"Yes, and he always says, too, that if we ain't awful careful we'll have a lawsuit yet, and be *forced* to give a

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

lot of our money over to Mom! Yes, I often say to Hiram, 'Better leave sleeping dogs lay,' I say, 'and not go tryin' to put Mom into the poorhouse.'"

"Yes, I guess anyhow then!" breathed Sadie.

"By to-morrow"—Jennie veered off from the precarious topic of their step-mother, for here was ice too thin for even private family handling—"we'll be getting a letter from Danny giving us the *details*. Say, Sadie, if he don't offer to pay our way, I ain't using *my* money to travel that far to his wedding."

"Nor me, either," said Sadie. "Do you think, Jennie," she anxiously asked, "folks will talk at our still keeping house for Danny when he's married? You know how Danny always made us promise we'd stay by him, married or single?"

Jennie sniffed. "As if he could get along without us! As if any one else could learn his ways and how he likes things—and him so particular about his little comforts! *He* wouldn't leave us go away! And look at what he *saves* with us paying half the household expenses!"

"And as for his wife's not liking it——" began Sadie.

"As for her," Jennie sharply put in, "she's coming here without asking us if we like it—she'll be put in *her* place right from the start."

"But if she's got money of her own mebbly," Sadie suggested doubtfully, "she could be independent, too, then."

"Well, to be sure she'd put her money in her husband's care, wouldn't she?—and him a lawyer."

"A body couldn't be sure she'd do that till they saw once what kind of a person she was, Jennie."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Well," Jennie stoutly maintained, "Danny'll *see* that she does."

It will be noted that the story of Miss Berkeley's "distinguished lineage" did not greatly impress Jennie and Sadie Leitzel. They did not quite understand it. They knew nothing about such a thing as a distinguished lineage; New Munich "aristocrats" certainly did not have any; and the sisters' experiences being limited to life as it was in New Munich, whose "first families" were such only by reason of their "means," Sadie and Jennie were ignorant of any other measure of excellence. To be poor and at the same time of any significance, was a combination unknown to them.

As the newspapers did not state how closely those ancestral governors were related to Miss Berkeley, the relationship was undoubtedly so distant as to be negligible.

The one thing that would have softened their attitude toward their new relative would have been an unequivocal statement as to the firm financial standing of her family. And on that point the newspaper, though furnished by Daniel himself with the facts, was ominously silent. The conclusion was unmistakable. She was certainly penniless.

It was not greatly to be wondered at that the Leitzels worshipped money. It was money that had done everything for them: it had rescued them from a fearful struggle for a bare existence on a small, heavily mortgaged farm; it had freed them from the grind of slavish labour; from an obscurity that had been bitterly humiliating to the self-esteem and the ambition which was characteristic of every

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

one of them. It was money that had given them power, place, influence; that made their fellowmen treat them with deference and relieved them from the necessity of treating any one else with deference. They knew of no worth in life unpurchasable by money. They did not, therefore, know of their own spiritual pauperism; their abject poverty.



## II

THE betrothal and impending marriage of Daniel Leitzel was the only topic of discussion that evening at the New Munich Country Club dance. Certainly New Munich had a Country Club. "Up to date in every particular." There was nothing in the way of being smartly fashionable that the town of New Munich lacked. Well, if up to the present it had lacked old families of "distinguished lineage," who, in these commercial days, regarded that kind of thing? Anyway, was not that lack (if lack it had been) now to be supplied by the newcomer, Mrs. Daniel Leitzel?

Not only at the Country Club dance, but wherever two or three were gathered together—at the mid-week Prayer Meeting, at the Woman's Suffrage Headquarters, at the Ladies' Literary Club, at the Episcopal Church Vespers, at the auction bridge given at Congressman Ocksreider's home—Danny Leitzel's betrothal was talked about.

"Just imagine this 'daughter of a thousand earls——' "

"Governors, not earls," corrected Mr. Schaeffer, the whist partner of the first speaker who was Miss Myrtle Deibert, as supper was being served at eleven o'clock on the card tables at Congressman Ocksreider's. "A thousand governors and highbrows—shy-lologists, or something like that—whatever *they* are!"



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Well, just imagine such a person living at the Leit-zels!"

"But you don't suppose Danny's sisters will still live with him after he's married!" exclaimed Mr. Bleichert, the second young man at the table.

"If he thinks it more economical, they certainly will," declared Miss Myrtle Deibert.

"Whew!" exclaimed Mr. Bleichert. "Good-night!"

"Who would have supposed any nice girl would have married old Danny Litzel!" marvelled Mr. Schaeffer.

"Oh, come now," protested Mr. Bleichert who was a cynic, "why have all the girls, from the buds just out, up to the bargain-counter maidens in their fourth 'season,' been inviting Danny Litzel to everything going, and running after him heels over head, ever since he built his ugly, expensive brick house on Main Street? Tell me that, will you?"

It should be stated here that it was an accepted social custom in New Munich for the people at one card table to discuss the clothes, manners, and morals of those at the next table.

"You know perfectly well," retorted Miss Deibert, "that at least two girls in this town, when it came to the point of *marrying* Danny, chucked it."

"I should think they might," said Schaeffer. "Why, he isn't a man, he's a weasel, a rat, a money-slot!"

"Well, of course, the girl or old maid, 'bird or devil,' that has caught him at last, isn't marrying him for himself, but for his money," serenely affirmed Myrtle Deibert.

"When she meets his two appendages, Miss Jennie and

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Miss Sadie, she'll wish she was single again!" predicted Mr. Bleichert.

"They'll probably think it their business to manage Danny's wife the way they manage him," Miss Deibert declared.

"I hope she's a spendthrift," shrugged Mr. Schaeffer. "It would give Dan Leitzel the shock he needs to find himself married to a spendthrift."

"She won't be one after she's Mrs. Daniel Leitzel!" Miss Deibert confidently asserted.

"But of course she's rich—Dan Leitzel wouldn't marry a dowerless woman," said Bleichert.

"Well, then he won't let her spend *her* money," Miss Deibert settled that.

The second young lady at this card table, a pale, serious-looking girl, did not join in the discussion, but sat with her eyes downcast, toying with her food, as the rest chattered. The other three did not give Miss Aucker credit for remaining silent because she found their gossip vulgar and tiresome (which was indeed her true reason) but attributed her disinclination to talk to the fact that during the past year Daniel Leitzel had been rather noticeably attentive to her; so much so that people had begun to look for a possible interesting outcome. Miss Deibert, Mr. Schaeffer, and Mr. Bleichert, therefore, all considered her demeanour just now to be an indelicately open expression of her chagrin at the news they discussed.

"He was her last chance," Miss Deibert was thinking. "She must be nearly thirty."

"One would think she wouldn't show her disappoint-

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

ment so frankly," Mr. Schaeffer was mentally criticising her.

"You know," chuckled Miss Deibert as she dabbed with her fork at a chicken croquet, "Danny, away from his sisters and his awful house and among strangers, would appear so like a perfect gentleman, even if he *is* 'a rat, a weasel, a money-slot,' that I think even the descendant of earls or governors might be deceived. You see he's had so many advantages; he was only ten years old when they discovered coal on their land and got rich over night. And from the first, his sisters gave him every advantage they could buy for him, sending him to the best private schools, and then to college, and then to the Harvard Law School; and every one knows that Danny Litzel is no fool, but a brilliant lawyer. So I do think that, detached from his setting here, there's nothing about Danny that would lead an unsuspecting South Carolina bride to imagine such contingencies as Jennie and Sadie and that Main Street house. I suppose *she* lives in an ancestral colonial place full of antique mahogany, the kind we all buy at junk shops when we have money enough."

"What kind of a woman would it be that could stand Dan Litzel's penuriousness?" Mr. Schaeffer speculated. "He makes money like rolling down hill and I've heard him jew down the old chore woman that scrubs his office and haggle over a fifty-cent bill for supper at the club. He's the worst screw I ever knew. And mind you, his bride's a Southern woman, accustomed to liberality and gallantry and everything she won't find at Danny's house!"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

‘Do you know (not many people in New Munich do seem to know) that the Leitzels’ *mother* is living?’ said Miss Deibert.

“*What?*”

“I know a woman that knows her. She lives in the Leitzels’ old farmhouse out in Martz Township.”

“But Miss Jennie and Miss Sadie are too old to have a mother living.”

“It’s their step-mother. But she brought them up from little children and I heard she even took in washing to support them when their own father drank—and now they’re ashamed of her and don’t have anything to do with her. I was told she’s a dear old soul and never speaks against them, but is as proud of their rise in the world as if she were their own mother. The neighbours out there say she has a hard time getting on and that they don’t do a thing for her except let her live in their old tumble-down farmhouse. Isn’t it a shame, as rich as they are!”

“You can’t believe everything you hear.”

“But it would be just like them!” affirmed Bleichert.

“Mary!” Miss Deibert suddenly laid her hand playfully on that of the silent Miss Aucker. “Congratulations on *your* escape, my dear!”

“I was never in the least danger, Myrtle. Aren’t we gossiping rather dreadfully? I’ve been wondering”—she looked up with a smile that transformed her seriousness into a gentle radiance—“what a newcomer like Mr. Leitzel’s wife, doomed to live here, will *do* with us and our social life, if she really is a woman of breeding and culture. I wonder whether it would be possible this winter to make



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

our social coming together count for something more than—well, than just an utter waste of time. What is there in it all—our afternoon teas, auction bridge, luncheons, dinners, dances. The dances are of course the best thing we do because they are at least refreshing and rejuvenating. But don't you think, Myrtle, that we might make it all more worth while?"

"There's the Ladies' Literary Club," Myrtle suggested, "for those that want something 'worth while,' as you put it. I think it's an awful bore myself."

"Of course it is," Mary agreed.

"But what would you suggest then?"

"I suppose it is after all a question of what is in ourselves. A dozen literary clubs at which we read abstracts from encyclopedias wouldn't alter the fact that when we get together we have so little, so *little* to give to each other!"

"Oh, I don't know!" protested Myrtle. "We all read all the latest books and magazines and talk about them, and——"

At an adjoining table another phase of the agitating news was being threshed out.

"If she's what the papers say she is, I suppose she'll turn up her nose at New Munich," said the daughter of the Episcopal rector.

"Oh, I don't think she need put on any airs!" said Miss Ocksreider, the hostess's daughter. "I've visited down South and I can tell you we're enough more up to date here in New Munich. Nearly every one down there, even their aristocrats, is so poor that up here they wouldn't be



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

anybody. It's awfully queer the way those Southerners don't care anything about appearances. They tell you right out they can't afford this and that, and they don't seem to think anything of wearing clothes all out of style. There was an awfully handsome new house in the town where I stopped, and when I asked the hotel clerk who lived in it and if they weren't great swells, he said: 'Oh, no, they are not in society; they're not one of our *families*, though they're very nice people, of course, members of church and good to the poor and all like that.' 'Not in society in a little town like this Leesburg, and living in a mansion like *that*?' I said. Yes, that's the way they are down there."

"How queer!" came from two of her table companions to whom, like herself, any but money standards of value were rather vague and hazy.

"But if they don't care for money down there, then what's this girl marrying Dan Leitzel for?" one of the men candidly wondered.

"Well, you know there's no accounting for tastes."

"I could excuse any woman's marrying for money—in these days it's only prudent," said the candid one; "but I certainly couldn't respect a woman that married Dan Leitzel for anything *else*."

"It's to be hoped she's an up-to-date girl and not a clinging vine, for Danny will need very firm handling to make him part with enough money to keep her in gloves and slippers and other necessary luxuries," said Miss Ocksreider.

"Yes, if it were only her husband that she'll have to manage; but there are Miss Jennie and Miss Sadie, too!"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

cried the rector's daughter. "Danny doesn't so much as put on a necktie without consulting them. They even tie it for him and part his hair for him."

"That may be," said one of the men, "but let me tell you that any one who thinks Dan Leitzel hasn't any force of character better take another guess. If he lets his sisters choose his neckties for him, it's because he doesn't want to do it himself. He's the most consummately selfish individual I've ever known in the whole course of my long and useful life and the most immovably obstinate. Weak? Why, when that fellow takes a notion, he's a mule for sticking to it. Reason with him? Go out in your chicken yard and reason with your hens. It wouldn't be as futile!"

"*He* may be independent of his sisters, but his wife won't be!" prophesied the rector's daughter darkly.

"Anyway," said Miss Ocksreider, "it will be interesting, won't it, to look on this winter at the drama or comedy or tragedy, as the case may be, of Danny Leitzel's marriage?"

"Won't it!" exclaimed in chorus her hearers.

But at one of the other tables a man was at this moment remarking: "You may all laugh at Dan Leitzel—he's funny of course—but he's all the same a man of brains and education, of wealth and influence and power. In short, he's a *successful* man. And in Pennsylvania who asks anything more of a man?"

### III

**M**EANTIME, several hundred miles away, the two objects of all this criticism and speculation were not so apprehensive for their future as were the gossips of New Munich, though it must be confessed that the prospective bridegroom, in spite of his jubilant happiness, did have one or two misgivings on certain points, and that the bride, while wholly ignorant of the real calibre of the man she was about to marry, and having no conception of such a domestic and social environment as that from which he had sprung, nevertheless did not even imagine herself romantically in love with him.

That a girl like Margaret Berkeley could have become involved in a love affair and an actual betrothal with a man like Daniel Leitzel, while apparently inexplicable, becomes, in view of her unique history and present circumstances, not only plausible, but almost inevitable.

Her entanglement with him may be dated from a certain evening just twenty-four hours before she met or even heard of him, when a little episode, trivial enough in itself, opened her eyes to an ugly fact in her relation with her sister to which she had been rather persistently blind.

She had been radiantly happy all that day because of the unusual circumstance that she had something delightful to anticipate for the evening. Her godmother, who

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

lived in Charleston, had 'phoned out to Berkeley Hill to invite her to go with her to see Nazimova in "Hedda Gabler"; and as Margaret had seen only three plays in all the twenty-five years of her life (though she had avidly read every classic drama in the English and French languages) she was greatly excited at the prospect before her. So barren had her girlhood been of youthful pleasures, so sombre and uneventful her daily routine, and so repressed every natural, restless instinct toward brightness and happiness, that the idea of seeing a great dramatic performance loomed big before her as an intoxicating delight. All day, alone in her isolated suburban home, in charge of her elder sister's three small children and of the two rather decrepit negro servants of the great old place, she had gone tripping and singing about the house. She had been quite unable to settle down to the prosaic work of mending the week's laundry, or of wrestling with the intricacies of Henry James' difficult style in "The Golden Bowl" in which, the night before, she had been passionately absorbed.

She could scarcely wait for her sister Harriet to come home from town, where she was attending a young matrons' luncheon party, so eager was she to tell her of the treat she was going to have.

"She will be so glad for me. I've scarcely been outside the hedge for a month, and she has been having such a gay time herself—she's so popular. She'll be *so* glad I'm going!" she repeated to herself, trying to ignore the doubt in her heart on that point.

But when at half-past four in the afternoon Harriet returned, the blow fell upon Margaret.



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Harriet, dear!" she exultantly greeted her sister with her splendid news the moment the latter came into the house, "Aunt Virginia is going to take me to see Nazimova to-night! Oh!" She laughed aloud, and danced about the spacious hall in her delight, while her sister, a very comely young matron of thirty-five, leisurely removed her wraps.

"But Walter and I are going," Harriet casually remarked as she tossed her cloak over a carved, high-backed chair. "The editor of the *Bulletin* gave Walter two tickets as part payment for some legal business Walter did for him. Of course you and I can't both be away from the children. Has the baby had her five o'clock bottle?"

"It isn't quite five yet."

"Will you see that she gets it, dearie? I'm so dead tired, I'll have to rest before dinner if I'm going into the city again to-night. Will you attend to it?"

"Yes."

"That's a dear. I'm going up to lie down. Don't let the children come to my room and wake me, will you, dear?" she added as she started languidly upstairs.

"But, Harriet!"

"What?" Harriet asked, not stopping.

"I accepted Aunt Virginia's invitation and she is coming out in her motor for me!"

"Too bad! I'm awfully sorry. You'd better 'phone at once or she will be offended. Tell her that as we are much too poor to *buy* tickets for the theatre, we can't possibly refuse to use them on the rare occasions when they're given to us!" Harriet laughed as she disappeared around the curve of the winding stairway.



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Margaret sprang after her. "Oh, Harriet! I can't give it up!" Her voice was low and breathless.

"But if you 'phone at once Aunt Virginia won't be cross. You know, dearie, you shouldn't make engagements without first finding out what ours are." And Harriet moved on up the stairs to her bedroom.

Margaret was ashamed of her childishness when at dinner that evening Walter, her brother-in-law, inquiring, in his kind, solicitous way, the cause of her pallor and silence, she burst out crying and rushed from the table.

Walter, looking shocked and distressed, turned to his wife for an explanation. But Harriet's face expressed blank astonishment.

"Why, I can't imagine! Unless she's tired out from having had the children all day. I was at Mrs. Duncan's luncheon, you know. I didn't get home until nearly five. I'll tell Margaret to go to bed early to-night and rest up."

Walter Eastman, searching his wife's face keenly, shrugged his big shoulders at the impenetrability of its innocent candour. No use to try to get at the truth of anything from Harriet. She wasn't exactly a liar, but she had a genius for twisting facts to suit her own selfish ends—and all Harriet's ends were selfish. Even the welfare of her children was secondary to her own comfort and convenience. Walter had no illusions about the wife of his bosom and the mother of his three children. He knew perfectly well that she loved no one as she loved herself, and that this dominating self-love made her often cold-blooded and even sometimes a bit false, though always, he was sure, unconsciously so. He was still quite fond of

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

her, which spoke well for them both, considering that they had been married nine years. Of course, after such a length of time they were no longer "in love." But Harriet was an easy-going, good-natured woman, when you didn't cross her; and as he was also easy-going and good-natured, and never crossed her when he could avoid it, they got on beautifully and had a pretty good time together.

Walter wondered sometimes what Harriet would do if placed in circumstances where her own inclinations would have to be sacrificed for those of another. For instance, if she and Margaret had to change places.

"Take Margaret to the play with you to-night and I'll stay home with the kiddies, Harriet," he suggested, looking at his wife across their beautifully appointed dinner-table with its old family china and silver. Harriet, in her home-made evening gown, graced with distinction the stately dining-room furnished in shining antique mahogany, its walls hung with interesting portraits. "If Margaret's had charge of the children all day, she ought not to have them to-night."

"No." Harriet shook her head. "Margaret ought not to go out to-night, she's too tired. And I want *you* with me, dear. Margaret is not my husband, you know. That's the danger of having one of your family living with you," she sighed. "It is so apt to make a husband and wife less near to each other. I am always resisting the inclination, Walter, dear, to pair off with Margaret instead of with *you*. I resist it for your sake, for the children's sake, for the sake of our home."

"I shall feel a selfish beast going to a play and leaving

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

that dear girl alone here with the babies. They're our babies, not hers, you know."

"She loves them like her own; she's crazy about them. They are the greatest pleasure she has, Walter."

"Because she hasn't the sort of young pleasures she ought to have. And because she's so unselfish, Hat, that she lets herself be imposed upon to the limit! I've been thinking, lately, that we ought to do more than we do for Margaret; she ought to know girls of her own age; she ought to have a bit of social life, now that the year of mourning is over. It's too dull for her, sticking out here eternally, minding our children and seeing after the house."

"But she's used to sticking out here and seeing after the house. When she lived here with Uncle Osmond she had a lot less diversion and life about her than she has now, and you know how deadly gloomy it was here then. We've brightened it up and made it a *home* for Margaret."

"The fact that she had to sacrifice her girlhood for your uncle is all the more reason why she shouldn't sacrifice what's left of it for our children."

"If Margaret doesn't complain, I don't see why you need, dear."

"*She'd* never complain—she never thinks of herself. Your Uncle Osmond took care not to let her form the habit! For that very reason we should think *for* her a bit, Hattie, dear. I say, we've got to let Margaret in for some young society."

"When I can't afford to keep up *my* social end, let alone hers? And if we should spend money that way for Margaret, where would the children come in?"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Oh, pshaw!" said Walter impatiently. "You're bluffing! You care no more about the money side of it than I do. You're not a Yankee tight-wad! Margaret need not live the life of a nursemaid because we're not rich, any more than you do, honey. It's absurd! And it's all wrong. What you're really afraid of, Hat, is that if she went about more, *you'd* have to stay at home now and then with your own babies. Eh, dear?"

But he was warned by the look in his wife's face that he must go no further. He was aware of the fact that Harriet was distinctly jealous of his too manifest liking for Margaret. Being something of a philosopher, he had felt occasionally, when his sister-in-law had seemed to him more than usually charming and irresistible, that a wife's instinctive jealousy was really a Providential safeguard to hold a man in check.

He wondered often why he found Margaret so tremendously appealing, when undoubtedly his wife, though ten years older than her sister, was much the better looking of the two. He was not subtle enough to divine that it was the absolutely feminine quality of Margaret's personality, the penetrating, all-pervasive womanliness which one felt in her presence, which expressed itself in her every movement, in every curve of her young body—it was this which so poignantly appealed to his strong virility that at times he felt he could not bear her presence in the house.

He would turn from her and look upon his wife's much prettier face and finer figure, only to have the fire of his blood turn lukewarm. For he recognized, with fatal clearness, that though Harriet had the beautiful, clear-



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

cut features and look of high breeding characteristic of the Berkeley race, her inexpressive countenance betrayed a commonplace mind and soul, while Margaret, lacking the Berkeley beauty, did have the family look and air of breeding, which gave her, with her countenance of intelligence and sensitiveness, a marked distinction; and Walter Eastman was a man not only of temperament, but of the poetic imagination that idealizes the woman with whom he is at the time in love.

"The man that marries Margaret will never fall out of love with her—she's magnetic to her finger-tips! What's more, there's something in her *worth* loving—worth loving forever!"

At this stage of his reflections he usually pulled himself up short, uncomfortably conscious of his disloyalty. Harriet, he knew, was wholly loyal to him, proud of him, thinking him all that any woman could reasonably expect a husband to be—a gentleman of old family, well set up physically, and indeed good-looking, chivalrous to his wife, devoted to his children, temperate in his habits, upright and honourable. She did not even criticise his natural indolence, which, rather than lack of brains or opportunity, kept his law practice and his earnings too small for the needs of his growing family; but Harriet preferred to do without money rather than have her husband be a vulgar "hustler," like a "Yankee upstart."

It was this same indolence of Walter's, rather than want of force of character, which led him to stand by passively and see his sister-in-law constantly imposed upon, as he distinctly felt that she was, though he realized that Mar-



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

garet herself, dear, sweet girl, never seemed conscious of it. Her unexpected outburst at dinner to-night had shocked and hurt him to the quick. He was sure that something really outrageous on Harriet's part must have caused it. Yet rather than "raise a row" with Harriet, he acquiesced in her decision to leave Margaret at home. It must be said in justice to him that had his astute wife not kept him in ignorance of their Aunt Virginia's invitation to Margaret he would undoubtedly have taken a stand in the matter. Harriet, carefully calculating the limit of his easy forbearance, knew better than to tell him of that invitation; and she could safely count upon Margaret not to put her in the wrong with Walter.

Margaret, meantime, locked in her room, had quickly got over her outbreak of weeping and was now sitting upright upon her bed, resolutely facing her quandary.

It was Harriet's assumption of authority, with its implication of her own subservient position, that was opening Margaret's eyes this evening to the real nature of her position in her sister's household.

"Suppose I went straight to her just now, all dressed for the theatre, and told her in an off-hand, careless, artistic manner that I couldn't possibly break my engagement with Aunt Virginia!"

Margaret, perched Turk-fashion on the foot of her bed, her hands clasped about one knee, her cheeks flushed, her eyes very bright, contemplated in fancy Harriet's consternation at such an unwonted procedure on her part—and she knew she would not do it. Not because, like Walter, she was too indolent to wrestle with Harriet's

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

cold-blooded tenacity; nor because she was in the least afraid of her sister. After living eight years with Uncle Osmond she would hardly quail before Harriet! But it was that thing Harriet had said to her this afternoon—that awful thing that burned in her brain and heart—it was *that* with which she must reckon before she could take any definite stand. “You should not make any engagements without first finding out what ours are,” Harriet had said, which, in view of all the circumstances, simply meant, “Being dependent upon us for your food and clothes, your time should be at our disposal. You are no more free to go and come than are the cook and butler.”

Now of course Harriet would never admit for an instant that she felt like that. Margaret knew perfectly well that her sister did not begrudge the little it cost to keep her with them. Harriet was not so thrifty as that. This attitude, then, was probably only a pretext to cover something else which Harriet was no doubt unwilling to admit even to her own soul, that something else which Margaret, herself, had tried so long not to see, which made her presence at Berkeley Hill unwelcome to both Walter and Harriet. And Harriet, too proud to acknowledge her true reason for wishing her sister away, pretended to an economic one.

“Suppose I said to *her*, ‘You must not make engagements without first finding out what mine are?’ Now if she had only said, ‘*We* should not make engagements without first consulting with each other.’ But she put all the obligation where she tries to persuade herself that it belongs.”

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

When presently Margaret heard her sister and Walter leave the house to go to the theatre she got up from her bed and went to Harriet's room adjoining the nursery, to keep guard over the three sleeping children until their parents came home.

Lying on a chintz-covered couch at the foot of Harriet's huge four-posted bed, she thought long and earnestly upon every phase of her difficult situation, determined that before she slept she would solve the apparently impossible problem of how she might leave Berkeley Hill.

#### IV

NINE years ago it was that Margaret, a girl of sixteen, had come out from Charleston to live at Berkeley Hill as nurse, amanuensis, housekeeper, and companion to her sickly, irritable, and eccentric old Uncle Osmond Berkeley, eminent psychologist, scholar, and author, who at that time owned and occupied the Berkeley homestead. It was the death of her father and Harriet's immediate marriage that, leaving her homeless and penniless, had precipitated upon her those years of imprisonment with an irascible invalid. Indeed so completely stranded had she been that she had accepted only too thankfully her uncle's grudging offer to give her a home with him on condition that she give him in return every hour of her time, making herself useful in every variety of occupation he saw fit to impose, and to do it all with entire cheerfulness and absolutely no complaining. That was the chief of his many "unqualified conditions"—a cheerful countenance at all times, no matter what her fancied reason for dissatisfaction, and no matter how gloomy *he* might be.

"I'm never cheerful," he had affirmed, "and that's why I require you always to be so. If that seems to you unreasonable and illogical, you're stupid. Give the matter a little thought and light may come to you. You'll have



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

plenty of chance, living with me, to develop what little thinking powers you may have—much more chance than you'd ever have in a school for young ladies, where you no doubt think I ought to send you for the next two or three years. Schools for young ladies! Ha!" he laughed sardonically. "Ye gods! Thank me for rescuing you from the fate of being 'finished' at one of them! Well named 'finishing schools!' They certainly are a girl's finish so far as common sense, capacity for usefulness, and ability to think for herself are concerned! And there actually are parents of daughters who seriously regard such schools as institutions of 'education!' Yes, education, by God! You'll get more education, my girl, from one week of my conversation than you would from a decade of one of those parasite factories!"

It was in the library at Berkeley Hill, the stately old country home which for seven generations had belonged to the Berkeley family, that this preliminary interview had taken place, her uncle in his reclining chair before a great open hearth, the firelight playing upon his pallid, intellectual face crowned with thick, white hair, and upon the emaciated hands clasping a volume on his knee. Repellently harsh he seemed to the shrinking maiden standing before him in her deep mourning, to be inspected, appraised, and catechised; for in spite of the fact that she had been born and brought up in the city of Charleston, only two miles away, her uncle had never seen enough of her to know anything about her.

Perceiving, now, how the girl shrank from him, his eyes sparkled; there was something ghoulish in his love of cow-



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

ing those who served him. For the past ten years he had had no woman near him save hired attendants who cringed before his bullying.

"A human creature who lets itself be bullied deserves no better," was his theory, and he never spared a sycophant.

"The day I have you weeping on my hands," he warned his niece as she stood pale and silent before him, "or even looking as though you were trying *not* to weep, out you go!"

The fact that the girl was scarcely more than a child, that she was alone and penniless, did not soften him.

"She's old enough to show her mettle if she has any. If she hasn't, no loss if she's crushed in the grind of serving me, for *I'm* useful, and shall be while I breathe and think."

"Well, what have you to say for yourself, wench?" he demanded when she had heard without a word his uncompromising statements as to what he would require of her in return for the "home" he would give her.

"I accept all your unqualified conditions, Uncle Osmond," she answered quietly, no tremor in her voice; and the musical, soft drawl of her tone fell with an oddly soothing and pleasing effect upon the invalid's rasped nerves; "if you'll accept my one condition."

Her uncle's white head jerked like a startled animal's. "What? What?" he ejaculated after an instant's stunned silence. "*Your* condition? Huh! You making a condition, upon my word! What pertness is this? A 'condition' upon which you'll accept my charity!"

"Not your 'charity.' The self-supporting position of your cheerful, uncomplaining, industrious, capable, untiring, companionable, intelligent chattel," came the musical,

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

lazy drawl in reply. "My condition is that you solemnly promise never again to call me a 'wench.'"

"I'll call you what I see fit to call you! If you're so damned squeamish, I won't have you near me! I'd be hurling books at your head!"

"I'm not 'damned squeamish,' Uncle Osmond, indeed I'm not. I really rather like the way you swear, it's so manly and exciting. But I won't be called a 'wench.'"

"Why not? I won't have my liberty of speech hampered!"

"Very well, then, Uncle Osmond, dear, I won't come."

"You shan't come! I wouldn't have you in the house, Miss Pernicketty!"

"Good-bye, then. I'm very sorry for you, Uncle Osmond. I'm sure the loss is yours. I would have been very kind to you."

"Sorry for me! You think well of yourself, don't you, wench?"

"At least so well that I'll go out sewing by the day, or stand in a store, or go on the stage, or turn evangelist (I've heard there's money in that) before I'll be called a wench!"

"What in hell do you imagine the word means?"

"I don't know what it means, but I won't be addressed as a wench."

"Get the dictionary. Look it up."

"But I won't be called a wench no matter what it means."

"*Won't* be called one! You dictate to me? Understand, girl, nobody dictates to me! Read Shakespeare's sonnet, *Lucrece*:

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

“*Know, gentle wench, it small avails my mood.*”

No offence in the word, you see, my authority being our greatest English poet.”

“Good-bye, Uncle Osmond,” she said, turning away and walking toward the door.

“Come back and behave yourself!”

She came back at once. “All right—and don’t ever forget your promise.”

“I promised nothing. I never make promises.”

“Your acceptance of my condition is a promise.”

“Acceptance of your condition!” He choked and spluttered over it.

“And it’s a mighty small condition considering all I’m going to do for you with cheerfulness, amiability, a pleasant smile——”

“Hold your tongue and speak when you are spoken to!” he growled, apparently furious, but secretly exulting at the child’s refreshing fearlessness with him.

It had been an instinct of self-preservation that had led Margaret to demonstrate to her uncle, in that very first hour with him, that the line would have to be drawn *somewhere* in his browbeating. And the word “wench” had served her purpose. Thereafter, in the eight years that she lived with him, docile and patient as she always was, he never forgot, and she never had to remind him, that there was a limit past which he could not safely venture in the indulgence of his tendency to tyrannize.

But her life was hard; most girls would have found its monotony and self-sacrifice unbearable; its gloomy environment in the great empty barn of a house too depressing;

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

its close confinement within the narrow limits of the unkept grounds, overgrown with weeds and bushes, and dark with big trees and a high hedge of hemlocks, as bad as any jail. There were sometimes weeks at a stretch during which she saw no human being save her uncle and the old negro couple who had lived on the place for a quarter of a century; for though Harriet and her husband lived in Charleston, her uncle would spare her so seldom to visit them, and was so exacting as to her speedy return to him that she soon fell into the way of confining her intercourse with her sister almost entirely to a weekly exchange of letters.

In spite, however, of her isolation Margaret felt that there were compensations in her lot. She had resources within herself in her love of books, and she found in her uncle's rich intellectual equipment, of which he freely gave her the benefit in their daily association, a stimulus, a variety, and even an excitement that meant much more to her than the usual girl's diversions of frocks, parties, and beaus would have meant. It is true she often longed for a congenial companion of her own age, she hungered for affection, she suffered keenly in her occasional feverish paroxysms of restlessness, and there were times when the surging fountains of her youth threatened to break down the barriers that imprisoned a nature that was both large and impassioned.

"She's temperamental enough!" was her uncle's early conclusion as, from day to day, the girl's mind and heart were unfolded to his keen observation.

Her rare periods of passionate discontent, however,



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

though leaving her spent and listless for a time after they had passed over her, did not embitter her. There was a fund of native sweetness in Margaret's soul that even her life with cynical old Osmond Berkeley could not blight. That philosopher marvelled often at his inability to spoil her, remarkably open as he found her young mind to the ideas and theories which he delighted in impressing upon her. It was indeed amazing how readily she would select from the intellectual feast daily spread before her what was wholesome and pure and reject what was morbid.

"That's right," he would approve when she would frankly refuse to accept a dogma laid down to her. "Better think for yourself, even though you think wrongly, than do as the other females of the species do—believe whatever they are told to believe—or, worse, what it suits their personal interests to believe. Be everlastingly thankful to me that I encourage you to think for yourself, to face the *facts* of life. George Meredith writes, 'The education of girls is to make them think that facts are their enemies.' *You* shall not escape some knowledge of facts if I can help it!"

"It's awfully nice of you to care so much about my mind, Uncle Osmond," she gratefully responded. "To really care for *anything* about me. I do love to be mothered and coddled and made much of!"

"Huh! 'Mothered and coddled and made much of!' You're at the wrong shop! And don't let me hear you misuse that word 'nice.'"

"I insist upon being pleased at your caring at least



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

about my mind! I'd be grateful even to a dog that was good to me."

"I'm not a dog, and I'm never so 'good' to any one that you could notice it particularly."

"Don't try to make yourself out worse than you are; you're bad enough, honey, in all conscience!"

"Hold your impudence and bring me Volume Third of Kant's 'Critique.'"

"Oh, dear!" Margaret sighed as she obeyed, "is it going to be *that* awful dope to-day? I hoped up to the last you'd choose an exciting novel. Do you know I don't think it's womanly to understand Kant's 'Critique.'"

"I've no desire to be womanly. Do as I tell you."

In addition to finding his niece capable and patient as a nurse and housekeeper, Margaret interested him more than any individual he had known in many years. He secretly blessed the hour when she had come into his sombre life to enliven and, yes, enrich it. Not for worlds, however, would he have let *her* know what she was to him.

There were rare moments when he was actually moved to an expression of gratitude and tenderness for his long-suffering victim; but Margaret's touchingly eager response to such overtures (heart-hungry as she was in her loneliness) while gratifying him, had always the effect of making him promptly withdraw into his hard shell again and to counteract, by his most trying exactions, his momentary softness; so that in time she learned to dread any least sign of amiability.

She did not know the full extent of her uncle's selfishness in his treatment of her: how ruthlessly he schemed to avert

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

the danger which he thought often threatened him of losing her to some one of the half-dozen middle-aged or elderly gentlemen of learning who had the habit of visiting him in his retirement and who, to the last man of them, whether married or single, adored his niece. It seemed that no man could lay eyes on her without promptly loving her (what men called love). Even his physician, happily married and the father of four lusty boys, was, Berkeley could see, quite mad about her, though Margaret never discovered it; she only thought him extremely agreeable and kind and liked him accordingly. Indeed the only fun she ever got out of this train of admirers was an occasional hour of liberty while they were closeted with her uncle; for he took care, as soon as he realized how alluring she was to most men, to have her out of the way when his acquaintances dropped in, a deprivation to his own comfort for which the visitor paid in an extra dose of pessimism and irony.

"When that child falls in love," Berkeley once told himself, "as of course so temperamental a girl is bound to do sooner or later, it will go hard with her. Let her wait, however, until I'm gone. Time enough for her then. I need her. Couldn't endure life without her now that I'm used to her!"

So he not only gave her no opportunity to meet marriageable men, he tried to unsex her, to engraft upon her mind his own cynicism as to the thing named love, his conviction of its gross selfishness, his scorn of sentimentality and of "the hypocrisy that would idealize an ephemeral emotion grounded in base, egoistic appetite."

"All 'love,' all attraction of whatever nature, is grounded

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

in sex," he would affirm. "The universe is upheld and constantly recreated by the ceaseless action of so-called love. A purely natural, physical phenomenon, therefore. There is not in life such a thing as a disinterested love."

"A mother's love?" Margaret once suggested in reply to this avowal.

"Entirely selfish. She loves her child as part of herself; all her pride and ambition for it are because it is *hers*."

"Well, if you call a mother's love selfish, there's no use saying anything more."

"And not to mince matters," he reaffirmed, "I want you to know for your own protection that a man's love for a woman is that of a beast of prey for its victim!"

"But I'm so safe here, I don't need such protection; I never *see* a man. No one but learned scholars ever come here."

"'Learned scholars' are not men, then, in your category?"

"Not the interesting wild kind that you warn me against."

"The man, woman, or 'learned scholar,' who has not a devil as well as an angel in his soul, a beast as well as a god, is too limited a creature to see life whole and big and round."

"Am *I*, then," she inquired with interest, "a devil and a beast as well as an angel and a goddess, do you think?"

"Mostly devil, you! I couldn't stand the angel-goddess combination. Even you, my girl, are wholly selfish; you would not stay with me for one day if it were not that I

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

give you a home. Come, now," he invited, and evidently expected a protest against this assertion.

"Why, of course I shouldn't. *Why* would I?"

He looked rather blank at this, though privately he never failed to find her honesty refreshing.

"I never understood," she added, "that it was a question of affection between you and me, did you, my dear?"

"Affection!" he sneered bitterly. "Affection for ourselves!"

"Of course. You wouldn't give me a bright and happy home like this if you did not need me to wait on you thirty-six hours out of the twenty-four with a cheerful, Cheshire-cat smile, and all for my food, bed, and two new frocks and hats a year."

"Have you no appreciation, girl, of the liberal education it is for you to be with me, to be permitted to read to me, to have such a library as mine at your command?"

"Yes, indeed, Uncle Osmond."

"Well, then?"

"But I don't stay here for the pleasure of your amiable society, dear," she assured him, patting his hand. "You're far too much like your old Scotch Thomas Carlyle that you admire so much. My goodness, what a life Jane must have led with that old curmudgeon!"

"Hold your impudent tongue!"

"Yes, dear."

"Don't speak to me again to-day!"

"Thanks; I'm so glad you don't also require me to be brilliantly conversational. I'd really have to charge extra for that, Uncle Osmond."



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

“Get me my eggnog!”

In spite of all Osmond Berkeley's precautions, however, Margaret did, of course, go through the intense and fiery ordeal of “falling in love”; for when a maiden's budding soul begins to unfold to the beauty of life, to throb and thrill before the wonder and mystery of the universe, no walled imprisonment can check the course of nature—she is bound to suffer the bitter-sweet experience of becoming enamoured of something, it doesn't much matter what; a cigar-shop Indian will suffice if nothing more lively comes her way. For circumstances are, after all, nothing but “machinery, just meant to give thy life its bent.” Berkeley, priding himself on his knowledge of sex-psychology, knowing that girls isolated in boarding-schools fall in love with their woman teachers, and in colleges with each other, nevertheless persuaded himself that he could, in this instance, defeat nature; that Margaret was being safeguarded too absolutely to admit of her finding any outlet whatever for the pent-up emotional current of her womanhood.

But there came to Berkeley Hill one day a stranger, an earnest young minister of Charleston, who, having read a magazine article of Osmond Berkeley's in which “the hysterical, unwholesome excitement of evangelistic revivals” was demonstrated to be purely physiological, wished to remonstrate with its author and point out to him that he was grievously mistaken.

One keenly appraising glance at the embarrassed, awkward young man as he was shown into the library where Berkeley sat in his armchair before the fire, with Margaret

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

at his side reading to him from a just published work by Josiah Royce, made her uncle decide that it would be superfluous to send her from the room—"on account of a creature like this, with no manners, no brains, and an Adam's apple!"

But it was the young man's deadly earnestness in the discussion between these two unequal protagonists that impressed itself upon Margaret's hungry imagination; his courage in coming with what he conceived to be his burning message of truth to such a formidable "enemy to truth" as the famous scholar, Dr. Osmond Berkeley. Evidently, the young man's conscience, in spite of his painful shyness, had lashed him to this visit, more dreadful than a den of lions. There were still, even in these days, it seemed, martyrs for religion.

Now, while Margaret of course recognized the intellectual feebleness of the young minister's side of the question which was under fire, nevertheless, before his visit was concluded, his brow wore for her a halo; his thin little voice was rich music to her quivering nerves; his unsophisticated manner the outward sign of a beautiful simplicity; his Adam's apple a peculiar distinction.

Berkeley, as soon as he found his visitor a bore, made short work of him and got rid of him without ceremony. In Margaret's eyes the young man stood up to his rebuffs like a hero and a martyr.

Her uncle did not notice, upon her return to the library after seeing the young man into the hall, how bright were her eyes, how flushed her cheeks, how sensitive the curve of her lips.



“ ‘Benefactor’ ? ” she read, “ ‘a doer of kindly deeds; a friendly helper.’ You see, I’m *your* benefactor, according to the Standard ”







## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Ha, ha!" he laughed sardonically, "wouldn't you rather go to hell than have to hear him preach?"

"You laugh like a villain in a melodrama!" retorted Margaret.

"I haven't laughed for twenty years except at damned fools. When did you ever see a melodrama?"

"Aunt Virginia took Harriet and me to see *The Two Orphans* once."

"Damned presumption of the fellow to come here and take up my time! He isn't even a gentleman."

"I thought you prided yourself on not being a snob, Uncle Osmond."

"Don't be stupid. Breeding is *breeding*."

"Well, what is good breeding if it isn't being courteous in your own house? You may call that young man common, but I doubt whether he bullies women!"

"You're cross!" he snapped at her. "Look pleasant!" he commanded, bringing his hand down heavily on the arm of his chair.

"I won't!" And for the first and only time in all the eight years of her life with him, Margaret turned upon him with a stamp of her foot.

He stared at her incredulously.

"You call *that* good breeding, do you, stamping your foot at your benefactor?"

"Benefactor?" Margaret flew across the room and violently turned the pages of the dictionary on a stand in the corner. "Benefactor," she read, "'a doer of kindly deeds; a friendly helper.' You see, I'm *your* benefactor, according to the Standard."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"You're begging the question: *is* it well-bred for a young lady to stamp her foot?"

"I'm ashamed that I did it, Uncle Osmond, and I beg your pardon."

"Your tone is not contrite!" he objected. But an unwonted flash in her eyes made him see that this was one of the places where he would have to "draw the line."

"You are tired," he said abruptly. "No wonder, after listening to the braying of that evangelical ass for nearly an hour! Put on your wraps and take a run about the grounds."

As with a look of relief Margaret turned to leave the room, he added in a tone that was almost gentle, "Put on your heavy coat, child, the air is very raw."

"Thank you, Uncle Osmond."

"And come back looking cheerful."

"I shall have to turn Christian Scientist if I'm to be cheerful under *all* circumstances—and you say you hate Christian Scientists because they are *always so damned pleasant*."

"You can't turn Christian Scientist and live in the same house with *me*!"

"But, Uncle Osmond, dear, I'm beginning to see that a Christian Scientist is the only thing that *could* live in the same house with you!"

With that she left him, to a half-hour of anxious consideration of her final thrust; for the one dread that hung over his life was the possibility of Margaret's deserting him.

## V

**M**ARGARET'S suddenly conceived passion for the young minister went through all the usual phases. It was not, of course, the individual himself, but her impossible inhuman ideal of him, of which she was enamoured, the man himself was as unknown to her as though she had never seen him; his image merely served as a dummy to be clothed with her rich imaginings. The thought of him dwelt with her every moment of the day, making her absent-minded and listless, or feverishly talkative. She made excuses to go frequently to town, to a dentist, to a doctor, to see Harriet, just for a chance to drive past the minister's parsonage, for even if she did not catch a glimpse of him, it was manna to her soul to look upon the place of his abode. She would have delighted to have lain her cheek upon the doorsill his foot had pressed. The actual sight, once or twice, of his ungainly figure on the street, set her heart to thumping so that she could not breathe. Her discovery, through a paragraph in the religious news of a daily paper, that he was married, did not affect her, for she was not conscious of any desire to marry him; she only wanted to see him, to hear him, to feel herself alive in all her being, in his presence.

Even the sermon she managed to hear him preach one Sunday morning, when a visit from one of the scholarly

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

gentlemen whom her uncle considered dangerous, gave her a free half day, even her recognition, through that sermon, of the man's mental barrenness, did not quench her passion.

What did finally kill it, after three months of mingled misery and ecstasy, was an occasion as trivial as that which had given birth to it. One day, in front of a grocery shop, where some provisions were being piled into her phaeton, and where, to her quivering delight, the Object of her adoration just chanced at that moment to come to make some purchases, she heard him say to a negro employee of the grocer, "Yes, sir, two pecks of potatoes and a head of cabbage; no, sir, no strawberries."

To say "sir" to a negro! The scales fell from Margaret's eyes. Her heart settled down comfortably in her bosom. Her nerves became quiet. The young minister stood before her as he was. His Adam's apple was no longer a peculiar distinction, but an Adam's apple. For this was South Carolina.

Thereafter, her uncle found her a much more comfortable companion. But keenly observant though he was, he had never suspected for a moment, during those three months of Margaret's obsession, that she was actually experiencing the thing he was so persistently trying to avert; for it would not have been conceivable to him that any woman, least of all his niece, Margaret Berkeley, could fall in love with "a milksop" like "Rev. Hoops," as the poor man's printed visiting card proclaimed him.

Never in all the rest of her life could Margaret laugh at that youthful ordeal. That she could have been so in-



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

sanely deluded was a mystery to wonder over, to speculate about; but the passion itself, the depth, the height, the glory of it, its revelation of human nature's capacity for ecstasy—all this was a reality that would always be sacred to her.

At the same time, her discovery that an emotional experience so intense and vital, so fundamental, could grow out of an absolute illusion and be so ephemeral, made her almost as cynical about love as was her uncle himself; so that always after that the seed of skepticism, which he so earnestly endeavoured to plant in her mind, fell on prepared soil.

Had Margaret adopted indiscriminately her uncle's philosophical, ethical, social, political, or even literary ideas, it would certainly have unfitted her for living in a society so complacent, optimistic, and conventional as that of most American communities. As it was, the opinions she did come to hold, from her intercourse with this fearless, if pessimistic, thinker, and from her wide and varied reading with him, and also the ideals of life she formed in the solitude which gave her so much time for thought, were unusual enough to make her unique among women. One aspect of this difference from her kind was that she was entirely free from the false sentimentality of the average young woman, and this in spite of the fact that she was fervently imaginative and, in a high degree, sensitive to the beauty and poetry of life. Another and more radical point of difference was that she had what so very few women do have—spiritual and intellectual fearlessness. And both of these mental attitudes she owed not only to

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

her own natural largeness of heart and mind, but to the strong bias given her by her uncle toward absolute honesty.

While, by reason of her more than ordinary mentality, as well as because of a very adaptable disposition, Margaret bore her life of self-sacrifice and isolation with less unhappiness than most girls could have done, there was one phase of it which was vastly harder upon her. Her nature being unusually strong in its affections, it took hard schooling indeed before she could endure with stoicism the loveless life she led. It was upon her relation with her elder sister Harriet, the only human being who really belonged to her, that she tried to feed her starved heart, cherishing almost with passion this one living bond; idealizing her sister and her sister's love for her, looking with an intensity of longing to the time when she would be free to be with Harriet, to lavish upon her all her unspent love, to live in the happiness of Harriet's love for her.

Harriet's lukewarmness, not manifest under her easy, good-natured bearing, was destined one day to come as a great shock to Margaret.

It was one night about five months before her uncle's sudden death that he talked with her of his will. They were together in the library, waiting for Henry, the negro manservant, to finish his night's chores about the place before coming to help the master of the house to bed.

"I trust, Margaret," Berkeley, with characteristic abruptness, broke a silence that had fallen between them, "that you are not counting on flourishing as an heiress when I have passed out?"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"I must admit," said Margaret apologetically, "that I never thought of that, stupid as it may seem to you, Uncle Osmond. Now that you mention it, it *would* be pleasant."

"'Pleasant?' To have me die and leave you rich?"

"I mean only the heiress part would be pleasant—and having English dukes marrying me, you know, and all that."

"How many English dukes, pray? I fancy they are a high-priced commodity, and my fortune isn't colossal."

"I shouldn't want a really colossal fortune."

"Modest of you. But," he added, "if I did mean to do you the injury of leaving you all I have, it would be more than enough to spoil what is quite too rare and precious for spoiling"—he paused, his keen eyes piercing her as he deliberately added—"a very perfect woman."

"Meaning *me*?" Margaret asked with wide-eyed astonishment.

"So I don't intend to leave you a dollar."

"Suit yourself, honey."

"You are like all the Berkeleys, entirely lacking in money sense. Now the lack of money sense is refreshing and charming, but disastrous. I shall not leave my money to you for four reasons." He counted them off on his long, emaciated fingers. "First, because you wouldn't be sufficiently interested in the damned money to take care of it; secondly, you'd give it away to your sister, or to her husband, or to your own husband, or to any one that knew how to work you; thirdly, riches are death to contentment and to usefulness and the creator of parasitism; fourthly,

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

I wish you to be married for your good, sweet self, my dear child, and not for my money."

"But if I'm penniless, *I* may have to marry for money. From what you tell me of love, money is the only thing left to marry for. And if it has to be a marriage for money, I prefer to be the one who has the money, if you please, Uncle Osmond."

"Well, you won't get mine. I tell you you are worth too much to be turned into one of these parasitical women who are the blot on our modern civilization. In no other age of the world has there been such a race of feminine parasites as at the present. Let me tell you something, Margaret: there is just one source of pure and unadulterated happiness in life, and that I bequeath to you in withholding from you my fortune. Congenial work, my girl, is the only sure and permanent joy. Love? Madness and anguish. Family affection? Endless anxiety, heart-ache, care. You are talented, child; discover what sort of work you love best to do, fit yourself to do it preëminently well, and you'll be happy and contented."

"But my gracious! Uncle Osmond, what chance have I to fit myself for an occupation, out here at Berkeley Hill, taking care of you? These years of my youth in which I might be preparing for a career I'm devoting to *you*, my dear. So I really think it would only be poetic justice for you to leave me your money, don't you?"

Her uncle, looking as though her words had startled and surprised him, did not answer her at once. Considering her earnestly as she sat before him, the firelight



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

shining upon her dark hair and clear olive skin, the peculiar expression of his gaze puzzled Margaret.

"That," he said slowly, "is an aspect of your case I had not considered."

"Of course you had not; it wouldn't be at all like you to have considered it, my dear."

"Well," he snapped, "my will is made. I'm leaving all I have, except this place, for the founding of a college which shall be after *my* idea of a college. Berkeley Hill, however, must, of course, remain in the family."

"Don't, for pity's sake, burden the family (that's Harriet and me) with Berkeley Hill, Uncle Osmond, if you don't give us the wherewithal to keep it up and pay the taxes on it!" protested Margaret.

Again her uncle gazed at her with an enigmatical stare. "Huh!" he muttered, "you've got some money sense after all. More than any Berkeley *I* ever met."

"I know this much about money," she said sententially: "that while poverty can certainly rob us of all that is worth while in life, wealth can't buy the two essentials to happiness—love and good health."

"Since when have you taken to making epigrams?"

"Why, that *is* an epigram, isn't it! Good enough for a copybook."

"I tell you, girl, if I leave you rich, I rob you of the necessity to work, and that is robbing you of life's only worth. The most pitiable wretches on the face of the earth are idle rich women."

"If it's all the same to you, Uncle Osmond, I'd rather take my chances for happiness *with* riches than without them."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"I am to understand, then, that you actually have the boldness to tell me to my face that you expect me to leave to you all I die possessed of?"

"Yes, please."

"It's wonderfully like your damned complacency! Well, as I've told you, I've already made my will."

"Here's Henry to take you upstairs. But you can make it over, or add a codicil. Which shall I bring you to-night, an eggnog or beer?"

"I'm sick of all your slops. Let me alone."

"Yes, dear. Good-night," she answered with the perfunctory, artificial pleasantness which she always employed, as per contract, in responding to his surliness; and the absurdity, as well as the audacity, of that bought-and-paid-for cheerfulness of tone, never failed to entertain the old misanthrope.

Five months later the will which Osmond Berkeley's lawyer read to the "mourners" gave Berkeley Hill to Margaret and her sister, Mrs. Walter Eastman, while all the rest of the considerable estate was left to a board of five trustees to be used for the founding of a college in which there should be absolute freedom of thought in every department, such a college as did not then exist on the face of the earth.

Harriet's husband, being a lawyer, offered at once to secure for Margaret, through process of law, a reasonable compensation for her eight years of service. But Margaret objected.

"You see Uncle Osmond didn't *wish* me to have any of his money, Walter."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Don't be sentimental about it, Margaret. Your uncle had a lot of sentiment, didn't he, about your sacrificing your life for him?"

"He had his reasons for not giving me his money. He sincerely thought it would be better for me not to have it. He really did have some heart for me, Walter. I'm not sentimental, but I couldn't touch a dollar he didn't wish me to have."

"Then you certainly are sentimental," Walter insisted.

Almost immediately after the funeral Harriet and her family moved out from Charleston to live at Berkeley Hill with Margaret, retaining the two old negroes who for so many years had done all the work that was done on the estate.

"We couldn't rent the place without spending thousands in repairing it, so we'll have to live on it ourselves."

The sentiment that Margaret and Harriet cherished for this old homestead which had for so long been occupied by some branch of the family was so strong as to preclude any idea of selling the place.

It was Margaret's wish, at this time, to go away from Berkeley Hill and earn her own living, as much for the adventure of it as because she thought she ought not to be a burden to Walter. But the Southerner's principle that a woman may with decency work for her living only when bereft of all near male kin to earn it for her led Walter to protest earnestly against her leaving their joint home.

Harriet, too, was at first opposed to it.

"You could be such a help and comfort to me, Margaret,

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

dear, if you'd stay. Henry and Chloe are too old and have too much work to do on this huge place to help me with the children; and out here I can't do as I did in Charleston—get in some one to stay with the babies whenever I want to go anywhere. So you see how tied down I'd be. But with you here, I should always feel so comfortable about the children whenever I had to be away from them."

"But for what it would cost Walter to support me, Harriet, dear, you could keep a nurse for the children."

"And spend half my time at the Employment Agency. A servant would leave as soon as she discovered how lonesome it is out here, a half mile from the trolley line. It's well Henry and Chloe are too attached to the place to leave it."

"So the advantage of having me rather than a child's nurse is that I'd be a fixture?" Margaret asked, hiding with a smile her inclination to weep at this only reason Harriet had to urge for her remaining with her.

"Of course you'll be a fixture," Harriet answered affectionately. "Walter and I are only too *glad* to give you a home."

So, for nearly a year after her uncle's death, Margaret continued to live at Berkeley Hill.

Harriet always referred to their home as "My house," "My place," and never dreamed of consulting her younger sister as to any changes she saw fit to make in the rooms or about the grounds.

It was during these first weeks of Margaret's life with Harriet that she suffered the keen grief of finding her own warm affection for her sister thrown back upon itself in



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Harriet's want of enthusiasm over their being together; her always cool response to Margaret's almost passionate devotion; her abstinence from any least approach to sisterly intimacy and confidence. It was not that Harriet disliked Margaret or meant to be cold to her. It was only that she was constitutionally selfish and indifferent.

So, in the course of time, Margaret came to lavish all the thwarted tenderness of her heart upon her sister's three very engaging children.

But before that first year of her new life had passed over her head she came to feel certain conditions of it to be so unbearable that, in spite of Walter's protests (only Walter's this time), she made a determined effort to get some self-supporting employment. And it was then that she became aware of a certain fact of modern life of which her isolation had left her in ignorance: she discovered that in these days of highly specialized work there was no employment of any sort to be obtained by the untrained. School teachers, librarians, newspaper women, even shop-girls, seamstresses, cooks, and housemaids must have their special equipment. And Margaret had no money with which to procure this equipment. There is, perhaps, no more tragic figure in our strenuous modern life than the penniless woman of gentle breeding, unqualified for self-support.

The worst phase of Margaret's predicament was that it had become absolutely impossible for her to continue to live longer under the same roof with Walter and Harriet. The simple truth was, Harriet was jealous of Walter's quite brotherly affection for her—for so Margaret

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

interpreted his kindly attitude toward her. Having no least realization of her own unusual maidenly charm, the fact that her brother-in-law was actually fighting a *grande passion* for her would have seemed to her grotesque, incredible; for Walter, being a Southern gentleman, controlled his feelings sufficiently to treat her always with scrupulous consideration and courtesy. Therefore, she considered Harriet's jealousy wholly unreasonable. Why, her sister seemed actually afraid to trust the two of them alone in the house together! (Margaret did not dream that Walter was afraid to trust himself alone in the house with her.) And if by chance Harriet ever found them in a tête-à-tête, she would not speak to Margaret for days, and as Walter, too, was made to take his punishment, Margaret was sure he must wish her away. Of course, since she had become a cause for discord and unhappiness between Harriet and Walter, she must go. A way *must* be found for her to live away from Berkeley Hill.

It was this condition of things which she faced the night she lay on the couch in her sister's room keeping guard over her sleeping children while Harriet and Walter were seeing Nazimova in "Hedda Gabler."

## VI

**W**ALTER EASTMAN, on his way to town next morning, to his law office, considered earnestly his young sister-in-law's admonition given him just after breakfast, that he must that day borrow for her a sufficient sum of money to enable her to take the course of instruction in a school for librarians, giving as security a mortgage on her share in Berkeley Hill. And the conclusion to which his weighty consideration of the proposition brought him was that instead of mortgaging their home, he would bring Daniel Leitzel, Esquire, out to Berkeley Hill to dinner.

"Margaret's never had a chance. She's never in her life met any marriageable men. It's about time she did. She hasn't the least idea what a winner she'd be, given her fling! And the sooner she's married," he grimly told himself, "the better for me, by heaven!"

Walter was too disillusioned as to the permanence and reality of love to feel any scruples about letting Margaret in for matrimony with a man twenty years her senior and of so little personal charm as was the prominent Pennsylvania lawyer, Mr. Leitzel, so long as the man was decent (as Leitzel so manifestly was) and a gentleman. It would have taken a keener eye than Walter Eastman's to have perceived, on a short, casual acquaintance, that

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

the well-mannered, able, and successful corporation lawyer was not, in Walter's sense, a gentleman. For Daniel had, ever since the age of ten, been having many expensive "advantages."

And so it came to pass that that same evening found Mr. Leitzel, after a dainty and beautifully appointed dinner at Berkeley Hill, alone with his host's young sister-in-law, in the wonderfully equipped library of the late eminent Dr. Osmond Berkeley.

His comely hostess, Mrs. Eastman, had excused herself after dinner to go to her babies, and Eastman himself had just been called to the telephone.

Daniel, always astutely observant, recognized their scheme to leave him alone with this marriageable young lady of the family, while Margaret herself never dreamed of such a thing.

Daniel was always conscious, in the presence of young women, of his high matrimonial value. He had always regarded his future wife, whoever she might be, as a very fortunate individual indeed. His sisters, in whom his faith was absolute, had, for twenty-five years, been instilling this dogma into him. Also, Daniel was mistaking the characteristic Southern cordiality of this family for admiration of himself. Especially this attractive girl, alone with him here in the great, warm, bright room, packed with books and hung with engravings and prints, manifested in her attentive and pleasant manner how irresistible she found him. Daniel loved to be made much of. And by such a girl as this! The blood went to his head as he contemplated her, seated before him in a low



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

chair in front of the big, old-fashioned fireplace, dressed very simply all in white. How awfully attractive she was! Odd, too, for she wasn't, just to say, a beauty. Daniel considered himself a connoisseur as to girls, and he was sure that Miss Berkeley's warm olive skin just escaped being sallow, that her figure was more boyish than feminine, and her features, except, perhaps, her beautiful dark eyes, not perfect. But it was her arresting individuality, the subtle magnetism that seemed to hang about her, challenging his curiosity to know more of her, to understand her, that fascinated him in a manner unique in his experience of womankind. Subtle, indeed, was the attraction of a woman who could, in just that way, impress a mind like Daniel's, which, extraordinarily keen in a practical way, was almost devoid of imagination. But everything this evening conduced to the firing of what small romantic faculty he possessed: the old homestead suggestive of generations of ease and culture, the gracious, soft-voiced ladies, their marked appreciation of himself (which was of course his due), the good dinner served on exquisite china and silver in the spacious dining-room (Daniel, in his own home, had never committed the extravagance of solid mahogany, oriental rugs, and family portraits, but he had gone so far as to price them and therefore understood what an "outlay" must have been made here). And then the beautiful drawing-room into which he had been shown upon his arrival, furnished in antique Hepplewhite, the walls hung with Spanish and Dutch oils. And now this distinguished looking library in which they sat. Almost all the books Daniel

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

possessed, besides his law books, were packed into a small oak bookcase in his own bedroom. But here were books in many languages; hundreds of old volumes in calf and cloth that showed long and hard usage, as well as shelves and shelves of modern works in philosophy, science, history, poetry, and fiction. What would it feel like to have been born of a race that for generations had been educated, rich, and respectable—not to remember a time when your family had been poor, ignorant, obscure, and struggling for a bare existence? In New Munich the “aristocracy” was made up of people who kept large department or jewellery or drug stores, or were in the wholesale grocery business; even Congressman Ocksreider had started life as an office boy and Judge Miller’s father had kept a livery stable. *This* home seemed to stand for something so far removed from New Munich values! And these two ladies of the house—he was sure he had never in his life met any ladies so “elegant and refined” in their speech, manner, movements, and appearance.

Daniel’s recognition of all this, however, did not humble or abash him. He had too long enjoyed the prerogative that goes with wealth not to feel self-assured in any circumstances, and his attitude toward mankind in general was patronizing.

It never occurred to him for an instant that a family living like this could be poor. Wealth seemed to him so essentially the foundation of civilization that to be enjoying social distinction, ease, comfort, and even luxury, with comparative poverty, would have savoured of anarchy.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Margaret, meantime, was regarding "Walter's odd little lawyer-man," who had been quite carelessly left on her hands, with rather lukewarm interest, though there were some things about him that did arrest her curious attention: the small, sharp eyes that bored like gimlets straight through you, and the thin, tightly closed lips that seemed to express concentrated, invincible obstinacy.

"No wonder he's a successful lawyer," she reflected. "No detail could escape those little eyes, and there'd be no appeal, I fancy, from his viselike grip of a victim. He'd have made even a better detective."

The almost sinister power of penetration and strength of will that the man's sharp features expressed seemed to her grotesquely at variance with his insignificant physique.

"There never has been a great woman lawyer, has there?" she asked him, "except Portia?"

"'Portia?' Portia who? I had not—you mean, perhaps, some ancient Greek?" asked Daniel. "Ah!" he exclaimed, "'The quality of mercy is not strained!' Yes. Just so. Portia. 'Merchant of Venice,' he added, looking highly pleased with himself. "I studied drama in my freshman year at Harvard."

"Did you?"

"Yes. My sisters had me very thoroughly educated. Very expensively, too. But this 'Portia'—she was of course a fictitious, not a historic, character, if I remember rightly. Women haven't really brains enough, or of the sort, that could cope with such severe study as that of the law." He waved the matter aside with a gesture of his long, thin fingers.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"I'm not sure of *that*," Margaret maintained.

"But the courtroom is no place for a decent woman," said Daniel dogmatically.

"But she could specialize. These are the days, I'm told, when to succeed is to specialize. She wouldn't need to practise in the criminal courts."

"I trust," said Daniel stiffly, "you are not a Suffragist. You don't look like one."

"How do they look?"

"I never saw one, for we don't have them in New Munich, where I live. But I'm sure they don't look so womanly as you do."

"I hope that to look womanly isn't to look stupid," said Margaret solicitously.

"Why should it?—though to be sure a woman does just as well if she isn't too bright."

"If to be womanly meant all that some men seem to think it means, we'd have to have idiot asylums for womanly females," declared Margaret. "I suppose"—she changed the subject and perfunctorily made conversation—"a lawyer's work is full of interest and excitement?"

"Well," Mr. Leitzel smiled, "in these days, a lawyer for a corporation has got to be Johnny-on-the-spot."

"I have always thought that a general practitioner must often find his work a terrible strain upon his sympathies," said Margaret.

"Oh, no; business is business, you know."

"And necessarily inhuman?"

"Unhuman, rather. A man must not have 'sympathies' in the practice of the law."



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"He can't help it, can he?—unless he's a soulless monster."

Daniel looked at her narrowly. What a queer expression for a young lady to use: "a soulless monster."

"Your brother-in-law, for instance," he inquired with his thin, tight little smile, "does he, as a general practitioner, find his cases a great strain on his sympathies?"

"Oh, he hasn't enough cases to find them a great strain of any kind."

"So?" Daniel lifted his pale eyebrows. It was, then, inherited wealth, he reflected, that maintained this luxurious home, and if so, this Miss Berkeley, probably, shared that inheritance. His heart began to thump in his narrow chest. His calculating eye scanned the girl's figure, from her crown of dark hair to her shapely foot.

Now it is necessary to state just here that Daniel's one vulnerable spot being his fondness for young pets of any species and especially for children, together with his deep-seated aversion to the idea of his money going to the offspring of his brother Hiram (for, of course, he would never will a dollar of it away from the Leitzel family), this shrewd little man never appraised a woman's matrimonial value without considering her physical equipment for successful motherhood. He had even read several books on the subject and had paid a big fee to a specialist to learn how to judge of a woman's health and capacity for child-bearing. The distinguished specialist had laughed with his *amante* afterward at the way he had "bluffed and soaked the rich little cad."

"I certainly did make him pay up!" he had chuckled.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"And as he'll never find just the combination of physical and mental endowments I've prescribed for him, I've saved some woman from the fate of becoming his wife! Money-making is his passion—a woman will never be—and his interest in it is matched only by his keenness and his caution. He's a peculiar case of mental and spiritual littleness combined with an acumen that's uncanny, that's *genius!*"

It was, in fact, Daniel's failure to discover a maiden who answered satisfactorily to all the tests with which this specialist had furnished him, together with his sister's helpful judgment in "sizing up" for him any possible candidate for his hand, that had thus far kept him unmarried; that had, he was sure, saved him from a matrimonial mistake.

As to his view of his own fitness for fatherhood, had he not always led a clean and wholesome life? Was he not expensively educated, clever, industrious, honest within the law, and eminently successful? What man could give his children a better heritage?

Yet the day came when the wife of his bosom wondered whether she committed a crime in bearing offspring that must perpetuate the soul of Daniel Leitzel.

"This estate," Daniel cautiously put out a feeler to Miss Berkeley, "belonged to your grandfather?"

"To several of my grandfathers. It came to us from my uncle."

"A lawyer?"

"Dr. Osmond Berkeley, the psychologist," Margaret said, thinking this an answer to the question, for she had

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

never in her life met any one who did not know of her famous uncle. "My goodness!" she exclaimed as she saw that Mr. Leitzel looked unenlightened, "you don't know who he *was*? He's turning in his grave, I'm sure!"

"I never heard of him," said Daniel sullenly.

Margaret smiled kindly upon him as she said confidentially: "Between ourselves, I don't myself know just exactly what a psychologist *is*. I've been trying for nine years to find out—though my uncle earned his living by it—and a *good* living, too."

"Didn't he ever explain it to you?"

"Oh, yes. He told me a psychologist was 'one who studies the science which treats inductively of the phenomena of human consciousness, and of the nature and relations of the mind which is the subject of such phenomena.'"

Daniel looked at her uncertainly. Was she laughing at him? "It's just mental science, you know," he ventured. "I studied a little mental science at college. It was compulsory. But I studied it so little, I didn't really know *very* much about it."

"If you had studied it a lot, say under William James or Josiah Royce, I'm sure you'd know even less about it than you do now. My own experience is that the more one studies it, the less one knows of it."

"Are you a college graduate?" Daniel asked with sharp suspicion; he didn't care about tying up with an intellectual woman. The medical specialist had said they were usually anæmic, passionless, and childless.

"No," Margaret admitted sadly. "I never went to

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

school after I was sixteen." Daniel breathed again and beamed upon her so approvingly that she hastened to add: "But I lived here with Uncle Osmond, so I could not escape a little book-learning. I'm really not an ignorant person for my years, Mr. Leitzel."

"I can see that you are not," Daniel graciously allowed. "Are you fond of reading?" he added, conversationally, not dreaming how stupid the question seemed to the young lady he addressed.

"Well, naturally," she said.

"Yes, I suppose so, with such a library as this in the house. It belongs to—to you?"

"What? The books?" she vaguely repeated. "They go, of course, with the house. Do you accomplish much reading outside of your profession, Mr. Leitzel?"

"No."

"Not even an occasional novel?"

"I never read novels. I did read 'Ivanhoe' at Harvard in the freshman English course. But that's the only one."

Margaret stared for an instant, then recovered herself. "I see now," she said, "why you have done what they call 'made good.' You have specialized, excluding from your life every other possible interest save that one little goal of your ambition."

"'Little goal?' Not very little, Miss Berkeley! The law business of which I am the head earns a yearly income of——"

But he stopped short. If this girl *were* destined to the good fortune of becoming Mrs. Leitzel, she must have no idea of the size of his income. Nobody had, not even his



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

sisters. He often smiled in secret at his mental picture of the astonishment and delight of Jennie and Sadie if suddenly told the exact figures; and certainly his wife was the last person in the world who must know. It might make her extravagant.

"The annual earnings of our law-firm," he changed the form of his sentence, "are sufficient to enable me to invest some money every year, after paying the twenty-five lawyers and clerks in my employ salaries ranging from twenty-five hundred dollars a year down to five dollars a week. So you see my 'goal' was not little."

"I suppose even your five-dollar-a-week clerks have to be especially equipped, don't they?" Margaret asked, with what seemed to him stupid irrelevance, since he was looking for an exclamation of wonder and admiration at the figures stated.

"Of course, we employ only experienced stenographers," he curtly replied.

"This specializing of our modern life, narrowing one's interests to just one point; one can't help wondering what effect it's going to have upon the race."

"Eugenics," Daniel nodded intelligently. "You are interested in eugenics?" he politely inquired. "It's quite a fad these days, isn't it, among the ladies, and even among some gentlemen, if one can believe the newspapers."

"It's not my fad," said Margaret.

"You like children, I hope?" he quickly asked.

"Do I look like a woman who *doesn't*?" she protested, not, of course, following his train of thought. She rose, as she spoke, and went across the room to turn down a

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

hissing gas-jet. Daniel's eyes followed her graceful, leisurely walk down the length of the room, and as she raised her arm above her head, he took in the delicate curve of her bosom, her rather broad, boyish shoulders, the clear, rich olive hue of her skin. The specialist he had consulted years ago had said that a *clear* olive skin meant not only perfect health, but a warm temperament that loved children.

"Anyway," thought Daniel with a hot impulse the like of which his slow blood had never known, "she's the woman I want! I believe I'd want her if she didn't have a dollar!"

It was upon this reckless conclusion that, when she had returned to her seat, he suddenly decided to put a question to her that would better be settled before he allowed his feelings to carry him too far.

"But," thought he as he looked at her, "I've got to put it cautiously and—and *delicately*."

"Miss Berkeley?"

"Yes, Mr. Leitzel?"

"I've been thinking of buying myself an automobile."

"Have you?"

"A very handsome and expensive one, you know."

"Ah!"

"Yes. But now I'm hesitating after all."

"Are you?"

"Yes. Because there's another expense I may have to meet. I'm going to ask you a question. Which, in a general way, do you think would cost more to keep—an automobile or—or a—well, a wife?"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Oh, an automobile!" laughed Margaret.

Daniel grinned broadly as he gazed at her; evidently she suspected the delicate drift of his idea and was advising him for her own advantage. Nothing slow about *her*!

"Wives are cheap compared to automobiles," she insisted.

"You really think so?" He couldn't manage to keep from his voice a slight note of anxiety. "Living here with your married sister, you are in a position to judge."

Margaret began to wonder whether this man were a humourist or an idiot. But before she could reply, their tête-à-tête, so satisfactory to Mr. Leitzel, was interrupted. Mr. and Mrs. Eastman returned to the library.

Now as the formality of chaperoning was not practised in New Munich, Daniel, with all his "advantages," had never heard of it. When, therefore, the Eastmans settled themselves with the evident intention of remaining in the room, their guest found himself feeling chagrined, not only because he preferred to be alone with Miss Berkeley, but because the conclusion was forced upon him that he must have been mistaken in assuming that they had designedly left him with her after dinner.

This conclusion was confirmed when Miss Berkeley, quite deliberately leaving the obligation of entertaining him to her elders, changed her seat to a little distance from him, and in the conversation that followed took very little part. She even seemed, in the course of a half-hour, rather bored and—Daniel couldn't help seeing it—

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

sleepy. Could it be, he wondered with a sinking heart, that she was already engaged to another man? How else explain this indifference?

But as the evening moved on, and the married pair, in spite of some subtle hints on his part, still sat glued to their chairs, though he could see that they, too, were tired and sleepy, he surmised that their "game" was to *hinder* Miss Berkeley's marriage!

"They'd like to keep her money in the family for *their* children, I guess!" he shrewdly concluded.

The easy indifference to money that was characteristic of the whole tribe of Berkeleys would have seemed an appalling shortcoming to Daniel Leitzel had he been capable of conceiving of such a mental state.

With a mind keen to see minute details, interpreting what he saw in the light of his own narrow, if astute, vision, and incapable of seeing anything from another's point of view, he came to more false conclusions than a wholly stupid and less observant man would have made.

When after another half-hour Miss Berkeley, evidently considering him entirely her brother-in-law's guest, rose, excused herself, said good-night and left the room, Daniel could only reason that Mr. Eastman had purposely withheld from her all knowledge as to *who* his dinner guest was.

"I'll circumvent *that* game!" he concluded, opposition, together with the indifference of the young lady herself, augmenting to a fever heat his budding passion. "*I'll* let her know who and what I am!"

Indeed, by the time he left Berkeley Hill that night, so



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

enamoured was he with the idea of courting Miss Berkeley, he did not even remember that in a matter so important he had never in his life gone ahead without first consulting his sisters' valuable opinion. That phase of the situation, however, was to come home to him keenly enough later on.

## VII

MARGARET was surprised next morning at breakfast when a humorous reference on her part to "Walter's funny little Yankee" met with no response.

"But, Walter, he's a freak! Didn't you find him so, Harriet?"

"Oh, I don't know. Walter says he's a wonder in his knowledge of the law."

"He has one of the keenest legal minds I've ever met," declared Walter, "though of course——" He looked at Margaret uncertainly. "Well, Margaret, after your eight years with a highbrow like your Uncle Osmond, most other men must seem, by contrast, rather stupid to you. Even *I*," he smiled whimsically, "must feel abashed before such a standard as *you've* acquired. But really, one can't despise a man who has reached the place in his profession that Leitzel has attained, even if he is a bit—eh, peculiar."

It never occurred to Walter to recommend Leitzel by mentioning that he was a millionaire, the man's prominence in his profession being, in Eastman's eyes, the measure of his value.

"It's going to be rather rough on your husband, Margaret," Walter teased her, "to have to play up to the

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

intellectual taste of a wife that's lived with Osmond Berkeley."

"But, Walter, other things may appeal to me: kindness and affection, for instance. My life, you know," she said gravely, "has been pretty devoid of that."

There was a moment's rather awkward silence at the table, which Margaret herself quickly broke. "This Mr. Leitzel—there's something positively uncanny in the way he seems to see straight through you to your back hooks and eyes; and I'm quite sure if there was a small safety pin anywhere about me last night where a hook and eye should have been, he knew it and disapproved of it. I'm certain that details like safety pins interest him; he has that sort of mind, if he *is* a great lawyer."

"Not great," Walter corrected her. "I didn't say great. He's able and skillful; but, I must admit, very limited in his scope, his field being merely the legal technicalities involved in the management of a corporation. However, he's a nice enough little fellow. Didn't you find him so?"

"I'm afraid I found him rather absurd and tiresome."

"Take care, Margaret!" Harriet playfully warned her, "or else—oh! won't you have to be explaining away and apologizing for the things you are saying about that man. He's *smitten* with you!"

Margaret's eyes rested upon Harriet for a moment, while her quick intuition recognized just why her joking remarks about Mr. Leitzel had met with no response in kind: her sister was actually seeing in this queer little man a possible means of getting rid of her, and Walter was abetting her!

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

She turned at once to the latter, swallowing the lump that had risen in her throat. "Have you done anything, Walter, about securing me a loan on our property?"

"I'm doing my best for you, Margaret."

"Thank you. Any chance of success?"

"I think so." He looked at her with a smile that was rather enigmatic, and she saw that he was really evading her.

"You know, Margaret," spoke in Harriet, "I shouldn't consent for a moment to have a mortgage put on my property."

"Tut, tut, Harriet," Walter checked his wife. "Leave it to me. Perhaps a mortgage won't be necessary."

He rose hastily, made his adieus, and departed for his office.

"Margaret, dear," Harriet began as soon as they were alone, "I assure you that to an unprejudiced observer, last night, the state of Mr. Leitzel's mind was only too manifest! You'd have seen it yourself if you weren't so inexperienced."

"What are the signs, Harriet? I confess I'd like to be able to recognize them myself."

"You sat almost behind him and he nearly cracked his neck trying to keep you in view. And when Walter drove him to the trolley line he talked of you all the way: said he liked your 'colouring' and your 'motherly manner,' and your hair and your voice and your smile and your walk! I'm not making it up—he's simply hard hit, Margaret."

"You'd like Mr. Leitzel for a brother-in-law, would you, Harriet?"



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"I shouldn't see much of him, living 'way up in Pennsylvania."

Margaret, who had not yet given up craving wistfully her sister's affection, turned her eyes to her plate and stirred her coffee to hide the sensitive quiver of her lips.

"We'd see each other very seldom, certainly, if I lived in Pennsylvania," she found voice to say after a moment. "I'll go up to the baby, now, Harriet, and let Chloe come down."

When later that morning a delivery wagon left at Berkeley Hill two boxes, one containing violets, the other orchids, and a boy on a bicycle arrived with a five-pound box of Charleston's most famous confectionery, all from Mr. Leitzel to Miss Berkeley, Margaret was forced to take account of the situation.

Of course she could not know (fortunately for her admirer) that the lavishness of his offerings had been carefully calculated to impress upon her the fact which he suspected her relatives of concealing from her—the all-persuasive fact that he was rich.

A telephone call inviting her to go automobiling with him that afternoon was answered by Harriet, who at once accepted the invitation for her without consulting her.

"I'm perfectly willing, dear, to give up Mattie St. Clair's auction bridge this afternoon and chaperon you," Harriet graciously told her after informing her of the engagement she had made for her. "Chloe will have to keep the children."

Margaret made no reply. All these manifestations of Harriet's eager anxiety to be rid of her stabbed her miser-

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

ably. She went away to her own room, just as soon as her regular domestic routine was accomplished, and shut herself in to think it all out.

The fact that she had, because of the secluded life she had led, reached the age of twenty-five without ever having had a lover, must account for her feelings this morning toward Daniel Leitzel, her sense of gratitude (under the soreness of her heart at her sister's attitude to her) that any human being should like her and be kind, to the extent of such munificence as this which filled her room with fragrance and beauty. No wonder that for the time being she lost sight of the little man's grotesqueness in her keen consciousness of his kindness, and of the novelty of being admired—by a man. Yes, her momentary blindness even saw him as a man. Not even the cards which came with his offerings—the one in the candy box marked "Sweets to the Sweet," and that with the flowers labelled,

*Thou shalt not lack*

*The flower that's like thy face.*—SHAKESPEARE.

gave her more than a faint, passing amusement.

"‘The flower that's like thy face’; he should have sent me a sunflower or a tiger-lily," she ruefully told herself as she glanced at her dark head in a mirror. But she recalled something she had once said to her Uncle Osmond: "I'd be grateful even to a dog that liked me."

It was Harriet, not Margaret, who was shocked that afternoon at the revelation of poor Daniel's "greenness" when he found that Mrs. Eastman expected, as a matter of course, to chaperon her young sister.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Daniel interpreted this unheard-of proceeding as another proof of his sharp surmise of the previous night—the penurious determination of the Eastmans to keep Miss Berkeley unmarried. He resented accordingly the interference with his own desires and the persecution of the young lady. He would show this greedy sister of Miss Berkeley that he was not the man to be balked by her scheming, and incidentally he would win the admiration and gratitude of the girl herself by his clever foiling of the designs of her relatives.

“I’m very good to you and my sister, Mr. Leitzel,” Harriet assured him as she and Margaret shook hands with him in the hall, both of them wrapped up for riding. “I am giving up an auction bridge this afternoon to go with you.”

“To go with us? But—but you misunderstood my invitation, I invited only Miss Berkeley,” explained Daniel frankly.

“Oh, you have another chaperon then? If only you had told me so when you ’phoned this morning I needn’t have given up my bridge party.”

“Told you what, Mrs. Eastman?”

“That you already had a chaperon.”

“Had a—*what*?”

“Haven’t you a chaperon, Mr. Leitzel?”

“‘Chaperon?’ But this isn’t a boarding-school, Mrs. Eastman!”

Harriet turned away to hide her face, but Margaret laughed outright as she asked him: “Don’t they have chaperons in Pennsylvania, Mr. Leitzel, to protect guileless and helpless maidens of twenty-five from any breach

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

of strict propriety while out alone with dashing youths like you?"

"If my sister went out alone with you in Charleston, Mr. Leitzel," explained Harriet with dignity, "she would be criticised."

"But—but," stammered Daniel indignantly, "I'm a trustworthy man, Mrs. Eastman! A *perfectly* trustworthy gentleman!"

"My dear Mr. Leitzel, I know you are! It's only a custom among us that—oh, come on, let us start! I'm sorry, Mr. Leitzel, but I'm afraid you'll have to put up with me."

"Yes, do let us start; we don't want to miss a minute of this lovely day!" said Margaret brightly, moving toward the door and drawing her sister with her. "I very seldom get a chance to ride, and I love it. You are so kind, Mr. Leitzel," she chatted as they went down the steps to the waiting car, "to give me this pleasure, besides the beautiful flowers and delicious candy!" And thus Daniel, though inwardly fuming, and wondering at Miss Berkeley's amiable submission to such unwarrantable meddling in her personal affairs, was forced to accept with what grace he could command the doubt cast upon his "trustworthiness."

As he assisted the two ladies into the automobile, Harriet of her own accord took the front seat with the chauffeur; and Daniel, as he realized how entirely isolated with Miss Berkeley this arrangement left him, felt himself thoroughly puzzled by the whole incomprehensible proceeding.



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

As on the previous evening Miss Berkeley's Southern cordiality of manner was interpreted by Daniel during this drive to be a gushing warmth of feeling for himself, which fanned the flame of his egotism no less than that of his passion.

While the car moved swiftly through the picturesque roads outside of Charleston he discoursed volubly; for Daniel's idea of an enjoyable conversation was a prolonged, uninterrupted exposition, on his part, to a silently absorbed listener, of his personal interests, achievements, excellencies of character, and general worthiness. He knew no greater joy in life than this sort of expansion before an admiring or envious companion. He fairly revelled this afternoon in the steady, monotonous stream of self-eulogy which flowed from his lips. It was meant to impress profoundly the maiden at his side, and it did.

"People call me lucky, Miss Berkeley, but it isn't luck; it's deep thinking. Nobody could be lucky that didn't use his judgment and keep a sharp lookout for the main chance. To have the wit to see and seize the main chance," he reiterated with an accent that made Margaret see the words in large capitals, "that's the secret of success. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, indeed—the point of importance being not to confuse one's values—material success and spiritual defeat not always being recognized, Mr. Leitzel, as twin sisters. We don't want to miss the main chance to grow in grace and—dear me!" she pulled herself up. "It sounds like Marcus Aurelius, doesn't it? Did you make *his* acquaintance at Harvard?"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

“Who?”

“The Roman Emerson.”

“Oh, but Emerson was a New Englander, not a Roman,” he kindly set her right; “known as the Sage of Concord, Massachusetts,” he informed her, looking pleased with himself.

Harriet in the front seat could not resist turning her head to meet for an instant Margaret’s eye.

“I had to read a ‘Life of Emerson’ in my Sophomore year at Harvard,” continued Daniel. “Do you know that his writings never yielded him more than nine hundred dollars a year! Well educated as he was, he never made good. A dead failure. Missed the main chance, you see. Now *I* have always turned every circumstance and opportunity, no matter how trifling, to my own advantage. Why, from the time I first began to practise law, I refused to take any case that I didn’t see I was surely going to win; so, in no time at all, I got a reputation for winning every case I took. See? I didn’t *take* a case I didn’t feel sure of winning. Good scheme, wasn’t it? Well, that far-sighted policy reaped for me, very early in my career, a big harvest; for when I was just beginning to be known as the lawyer who never lost a case, there was, one night, a shocking crime committed in New Munich: a young girl, daughter of a carpenter, was supposed to have been foully and brutally murdered by her lover, the son of a petty grocer on one of our side streets. (My own residence is on Main Street, our principal resident street, a very fashionable street; house cost me twenty-five thousand!—one of the finest residences in the town—so considered by all.) Well, the evidence against the lover was over-

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

whelming (I couldn't give you the details, Miss Berkeley, it would not be proper, you being a young, unmarried lady), and early on the morning after the murder the grocer came to see me on behalf of his son, begging me to take the case. He gave me all the facts and I saw very soon that the young man had *not* committed the crime. But I saw, also, that it would be very difficult to prove his innocence to a jury, and I knew the sentiment in the town to be furiously against the young man, especially among the women, so that I'd be apt to make myself very unpopular if I took his case; and that even if I cleared him there would be many who would continue to think him guilty and to think that I had simply cheated the law by my cleverness; cheated *moral* justice, too, and left a foully murdered female go unavenged, all for the sake of a fee. So I, of course, refused to take the case, though the grocer, believing me to be the one lawyer who could clear his son (such was my growing reputation), offered me a very large fee; he was ready to mortgage his store and house if only I'd take the case and save his son. The fee he offered certainly did make me hesitate; but you see, I was never one to let present profit blind me to future advantage. Most young men, less far-seeing and sharp, would have thought this a great opportunity to make a hit by clearing a falsely accused and perfectly innocent boy. But I saw much deeper into the situation, and so refused the case."

"Oh!" Margaret cried. "*There* you surely missed the 'main chance,' unless you afterward saw your mistake in time to change your mind."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"No, indeed, I didn't change my mind! And to show you how right I was in refusing the case, hear, now, of the immediate reward I reaped for my careful thoughtfulness. Hardly had the father left my office when a delegation of women of the U. B. Missionary Society (I am a member and liberal supporter of the U. B. Church of New Munich, my brother Hiram being an ordained U. B. minister) called at my office to *protest* against my taking the case for the young man's defence, the delegation including two very wealthy and prominent ladies. A false report had gone forth that I had taken the case. The ladies pointed out to me that I would be untrue to my Christian professions and unchivalrous to womanhood if for gold I stood up in court and defended the brutal murderer of an outraged, innocent female. 'Ladies,' I said to them, 'the case was offered to me, true; with a fee which some lawyers would have considered sufficient to justify their accepting even such a case as this. But, ladies, I refused to touch the case!' and, Miss Berkeley," said Daniel feelingly, a little quiver in his voice, "I wish you could have seen the look of admiration on the faces of those ladies, especially on Miss Mamie Welchan's, one of the two unmarried members of the Missionary Society, daughter of Dr. Welchans, our leading physician. Well, I certainly had my reward! And that night the New Munich *Evening Intelligencer* came out with a long article commending my fearless and self-sacrificing devotion to duty; and the Missionary Society passed resolutions of gratitude to me in the name of Womanhood, as did also the Y. W. C. A., the Epworth League, the Girls' Friendly of the Episcopal Church (our



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

most fashionable ladies are members of that Girls' Friendly), also several of the Christian Endeavour Societies of our town. You may imagine how glad I was I had refused the case. Just suppose I had accepted it!" he said in reminiscent horror of such a false step. "For, of course, I had not foreseen such an ovation as this. While I had seen the bad effects of accepting, I had not seen the good results of refusing it. Why, from that very hour, Miss Berkeley, my success was assured! You see, people believed, then, that I was conscientious, and they trusted me with their business, and my practice grew so fast that—well, it was only a few years before I rose to be the leading lawyer of New Munich, and a few more when I secured the cinch I've got now."

"Was the young man hanged?" asked Margaret in a low voice, not looking at him.

"Oh, *he*," returned Daniel, surprised and chagrined at her ignoring the real point of his story, which certainly had nothing to do with the fate of the young man; "they failed to convict him, though every one believed him guilty. He had to leave New Munich."

"*Couldn't* you have proved his innocence?"

"But, Miss Berkeley, don't you see I'd have ruined myself if I had tried, and I *made* myself by refusing that case; I have always considered that episode the turning-point of my career, the pivot on which my success turned uppermost; my brother Hiram, who is a theologian, considered it Providential."

"'Providential' that a young girl should be brutally murdered and a young man falsely accused so that you might—'succeed?'"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"I should say, rather, that by the ruling of Providence the chance was given me to refuse the case and thereby win the enthusiastic approval and endorsement of the best class of our community."

Margaret was silent.

"She isn't as bright as I had supposed she was," thought Daniel, disappointed at her want of admiration of his yarn. "I wonder if she'd bear me stupid children! If I thought so, I certainly wouldn't marry her."

"Early in my career," he, however, resumed his monologue, "I took a stand for temperance. I'm a total abstainer, Miss Berkeley, and I have found that on the whole it has been to my advantage, for besides being more economical, it has seemed more consistent with my Christian professions. To be sure, when the liquor men of our precinct practically offered to send me to Congress if I would uphold their interests, I did regret that I had taken such a decided stand for temperance that I couldn't becomingly diverge from it. I would have liked well enough to go to Congress. Jennie and Sadie would have liked, too, to have me a Congressman, and my brother Hiram thought if I were in Congress I could maybe work him in as chaplain of the Senate. He doesn't get a very big salary from his church at Millerstown, Pa., though he manages to live on it without touching his capital. But no! I told the liquor men I would not go back on the principles for which I had stood for so many years. You might think I was foolishly standing in my own light, Miss Berkeley, but I ask you, how would it have looked for a church member, a consistent, practical Christian, an

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

upholder of and contributor to the Woman's Temperance Union, to turn around and stand for the liquor interests? How would it have *looked*? Why," exclaimed Daniel, "it would have looked pretty inconsistent, and I wouldn't risk it. Anyway, see what I *saved* in the past twenty years by not standing for treats? 'Come and have a drink on me,' says a grateful client, when I've won his case for him, and I always say, 'I don't drink'; but if I did drink, to be sure I'd have to take my turn at the treats, too, don't you see, and that kind of thing does go into money. I've saved a good income by standing for temperance, besides earning the approval of an excellent element in the community. But it isn't always easy to say, 'I don't drink.' Some men take offence at it, and some laugh at you. I'll never forget how embarrassed I was the first time Congressman Ocksreider's daughter invited me to a fashionable dinner at her home and they served wine. I didn't know how they'd take it if I declined to drink, and I wanted to stand in with them. I was, at that time, very much complimented at their inviting me; they were the most prominent people in New Munich. And yet, sitting opposite me at the table, was a prominent member of the U. B. Church, who would certainly have a laugh on me if I took wine. *He* wasn't temperance. Now wasn't that a fix for me? My, but I was embarrassed! Well, Mrs. Congressman Ocksreider, a lady of very kind feelings, came to my help; the minute she saw how mixed-up I was, she told the waiter to pour grape juice into my glass. It's sickening stuff, but I was willing to drink it rather than forswear my principles right before

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

my fellow church member. Yes, it takes moral courage, Miss Berkeley, to stand by your principles as I have always stood by mine. And now I see my further reward in sight, for look how things are swinging my way: temperance, Governors, Congressmen, Presidents! I may yet get to Congress on the local option issue. It looks that way."

He paused to get his breath. Margaret made no comment on his long harangue, and Harriet did not turn her head. For a while they rode in silence. But at last Margaret, feeling it incumbent upon her to talk to her entertainer, roused herself from her rather unpleasant reverie.

"You spoke of two women, Mr. Leitzel—'Jennie and Sadie'—are they relatives of yours?"

"My sisters who raised and educated me, who made me what I am!" he replied in a tone of admiration for this remarkable feat his sisters had wrought. "All I am I owe to them!"

"They are to be congratulated."

"Thank you, Miss Berkeley." Daniel bowed.

"You're welcome, Mr. Leitzel. Shall we go home now? I feel ill."

"Motor riding makes you ill?" inquired Daniel solicitously.

"Under some circumstances. To-day it does."

Daniel at once gave the order to the chauffeur to return to Berkeley Hill.

Harriet, on the front seat, wondered, as she stared thoughtfully at the long, straight road ahead of her, whether "the game was up."



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"I'm afraid he's more of a dose than Margaret can swallow!" she thought anxiously.

When they reached home, however, she invited Mr. Leitzel to stop and dine with them. Margaret looked at her reproachfully as he eagerly accepted the invitation. It was two long hours before dinner time.

"You will have to excuse me. I shall have to go upstairs and lie down," Margaret hastily said as they entered the house; and before any one could reply, she flew upstairs and shut herself in her own room.

Harriet, to her consternation, found herself with Mr. Leitzel on *her* hands—and Walter not due at home for an hour and a half!

"I'll have the children brought down," she quickly decided. "That will help me out."

Little did she dream that by this simple manœuvre of introducing the children into the comedy she was turning the tide of her sister's life and settling her fate.

## VIII

**T**HREE weeks later, when Margaret came to review the course of events which had strangely led to the almost unbelievable fact of her betrothal to Daniel Leitzel, she realized that the "turn for the worse," as she called it, had come to her upon watching Mr. Leitzel with Harriet's children on that evening after the automobile ride which had made her spiritually ill. Squatting on the floor with the three babies gathered about him, he had actually become human and tender and self-forgetful; and he had exhibited a cleverness in entertaining and fascinating the bright, eager children that had evoked her admiration and almost her liking.

She had not come downstairs until just a half-hour before dinner, and as she had entered the library, dressed in a low-necked, short-sleeved summer gown of pale pink batiste, she had noted, without much interest, Mr. Leitzel's countenance of vivid pleasure as, from his place on the floor, unable to rise because of the children sprawling all over him, he had gazed up at her. But when, after watching him play for a half-hour with the babies, she had presently relieved him of the youngest to give it its bottle, she really began to feel, before the ardent look he fixed upon her as she sat holding the hungry, drowsy infant to her heart, a faint stirring of her blood.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"The Madonna and the Child!" he had said adoringly, and Margaret was astonished to find herself blushing; to discover that *this* man could bring the faintest warmth to her cheeks!

In the course of that evening, during dinner and later when the children had been taken to bed by Harriet, and Mr. Leitzel was again, as on the previous night, left on her hands, she could not be indifferent to the novel experience of finding herself the object of a fixity and intensity of admiration which, from a man so self-centred, suggested the possession on her part of an unsuspected power.

Even his occasional conversational *faux pas* did not break the peculiar spell he cast upon her by his devotion.

"Have you read many of these books?" he asked her, glancing at the shelves near him. "Here are about twenty books all by one man—James. Astonishing! What does he find to write about to such an extent?"

"They are the works of the two Jameses, the brothers Henry and William, the novelist and the psychologist, you know; only, Uncle Osmond insisted upon cataloguing Henry, also, with the psychologists."

"The James brothers? I've heard more about Jesse than about the other two. Jesse was an outlaw, you remember. The other two, then, were respectable?"

"Respectable?" Henry and William James? I'm sure they would hate to be considered so!"

Daniel nodded knowingly. "Bad blood all through, no doubt."

"Yes," said Margaret gravely, "of the three I prefer

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Jesse. He at least was not a psychologist, nor did he write in English past finding out! By the way, I remember Uncle Osmond used to say," she added, a reminiscent dreaminess in her eyes which held Daniel's breathless gaze, "that only in a very primitive or provincial society was a regard for respectability paramount, and that in an individual of an upper class it bespoke either assinine stupidity or damned hypocrisy."

Daniel started and stared until his eyes popped, to hear that soft, drawling voice say "damned," even though quoting. Why, one would think a nice girl would be embarrassed to own a relative who used profane language, instead of *flaunting* it!

"Wasn't your uncle a Christian?" he asked dubiously.

"Oh, no!" she laughed.

Now what was there to laugh at in so serious a question? Daniel was finding Miss Berkeley's conversation extremely upsetting.

"He died unsaved?" he asked gravely.

"I suppose a mediæval theologian would have said he did."

"I trust he didn't influence *you*, Miss Berkeley!"

"But of course, I got lots of ideas from him, for which I'm very thankful. If it had not been for his interesting mind, I could never have lived so long with his devilish disposition, or, as he used to call it, his 'hell of a temper.'" ("If he's going to fall in love with me," Margaret was saying to herself, as she saw his shocked countenance, "he's got to know the worst—I won't deceive him.")



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"I'm addicted to only two vices, Mr. Leitzel: profanity and beer."

Daniel smiled faintly, she looked so childishly innocent. "You are different from any girl I ever met. As a conversationalist especially. New Munich girls never talk the way you do."

"You mean they are not profane?"

"You're only joking, aren't you?" asked Daniel anxiously. "I didn't refer merely to your using oaths, but the ideas you occasionally express; that, for instance, about 'respectability,' I'm sure I never heard our New Munich young ladies say things like that. However," he added, his face softening and beaming, "nothing you could do or say could ever counteract for me the impression you made upon me as you sat there to-night holding that baby!"

"You are very fond of children, aren't you, Mr. Leitzel?" she asked graciously.

"Well, I should say! I'd like to have a large family, even if it *is* expensive!"

"So should I," said Margaret frankly; and Daniel had a moment's doubt as to the maidenly modesty of this reply, much as he approved of the sentiment.

After that evening, during the next three weeks, the course of Daniel's love ran swiftly, if not always smoothly; for his usually unreceptive soul was so deeply penetrated by the personality of this maiden whom he desired that he actually felt, intuitively, her aversion to certain phases of his mind the worthiness of which he had never before had a doubt, and he therefore curbed, somewhat, the

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

expression of his real self, adapting his discourse, though vaguely, to the evident tastes of the woman whose favour he sought. Also, his genuine interest in her made him less obnoxiously egotistical. Indeed, all his most offensive traits were, at this time, and unfortunately for poor Margaret's fate, kept so much in abeyance, and so strongly did she, quite unconsciously, bring out the little best that was in him, that her earlier impression of him was speedily coloured over by the more gracious effect he produced as a self-effacing and worshipful lover—a lover to one who, for many years, had not been treated with even common consideration.

Had Daniel had the least idea how little Margaret was touched by the *material* value of the gifts he daily laid at her feet, he would certainly have saved himself some of the heavy expenditure he considered necessary for the accomplishment of his courting. If he had known that it was only the attention, the thoughtfulness, the devotion showered upon her constantly that meant so much to her whose life had hitherto been one long siege of self-sacrifice, he would surely have limited the quality, if not the quantity, of his offerings.

As Margaret came to realize that she was drifting surely, fatally, into the arms of Daniel Leitzel, her conscience forced her to try to justify her selling herself for a home.

"To marry without love? But I might have married 'Reverend Hoops' for love! And he was so much worse—less possible," she amended her reflections, "than Daniel is. It was really *love* that I felt for that poor, bow-legged Hoops! Yes, the sort of love that would make marriage

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

a madness of ecstasy! Too great, indeed, for a human soul to bear! And even if one did not presently discover one's mate to be a delusion with an Adam's apple, who said 'Yes, sir,' to a negro, even if he continued to seem to you a worthy object of love, such an intoxication of happiness as I felt over my imaginary Hoops could not possibly continue, one's strength couldn't sustain it—one would end with nervous prostration!

"Hattie and Walter, when they married, were romantically in love, and now, what could be more prosaic than their jog-trot relation? So much for love." She dismissed that phase of the question.

But there was another aspect of a loveless marriage that had to be reckoned with.

"How would I be better than a woman of the streets? Yes, I would be better, for I would bear children. But children born outside of love? Well, Reverend Hoops might have been the father of my children even after I'd recovered from 'loving' him, and every one of my children might have had an Adam's apple. Better, it seems to me, to marry with eyes open and *not* blinded by 'love.' Then, at least, one would not have to suffer a dreadful flop afterward. The higher one's ideal in marriage, the more certainly does one seem doomed to bitter disillusionment. Probably the jog-trot, commonplace relation between a man and woman, recognized and accepted as such, is the only one likely to endure. Insist upon romance, and the end, I verily believe, is divorce. Daniel couldn't make me unhappy any more than he could make me happy—there's that comfort at least.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

“As for a great passion of the soul, the man capable of it is certainly a *rara avis* and isn't likely to come *my* way. If I thought,” said Margaret to herself, her heart beating thickly at the vision she called up from the depths in her, “that life held anywhere for me such a great spiritual passion, given and returned——” Her face turned white, she closed her eyes for an instant upon the too dazzling light of the vision. “But then,” she resumed her self-justification, “if the highest ideal of marriage is unrealizable, should one compromise with a lower ideal, or avoid marriage altogether? I remember Uncle Osmond once said it was a psychological fact that a woman was happier even in a loveless marriage than in a single life. And, dear me, the race can't stop because poets have dreamed of a paradise which earth does not know!”

It seemed to be another trick of the irony of fate that while everything in Margaret's environment and in her education conduced to make her walk blindly into such a marriage as this with Daniel Leitzel, nothing in her whole life had in the least fitted her for meeting and coping with that which was before her as the wife of such a man as Daniel really was.

She was glad that the form which her lover's proposal of marriage assumed obviated any necessity on her part for salving over her own lack of sentiment.

“Of course, you have surmised ere this, Miss Berkeley—Margaret—that I intended to make you an offer of marriage, to ask you to become—*my beloved wife!*” he said impressively, and Margaret checked her inclination to beg him not to make it sound too much like a tomb-



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

stone inscription. "My proposal may seem to you precipitate; I am aware it is unusual to propose on so short a courtship; you perhaps think I ought to keep on paying attentions to you for at least several months longer. But I can spare so little time away from my business. And to court you by correspondence—well, I am certainly too much of a gentleman to send typewritten letters, dictated to my stenographer, to a lady, especially one so refined as you are and one whom I want to make my wife. And to write out letters myself, that's something I have neither time nor inclination for. And something I'm not used to either. So, I thought that while I'm down here on the spot, I might as well stay and conclude the matter. That is why I have been so pressing in my attentions to you—not to lose time, you see, which is money to me and should be to every man. So with as much haste as was consistent with propriety and tact, Miss Berkeley, I've been leading up to this present hour in which I offer you my hand and heart and," he added, his tone becoming sentimental, "my life's devotion."

It sounded for the most part like a lawyer's brief, Margaret thought, as, sitting white and quiet, she listened to him.

"You have given me every reason to think, Miss Berkeley, by your reception of my assiduous attentions, that my suit was agreeable to you and that you would accept me when I asked you to, in spite of the evident opposition of your sister and her husband."

"But they are not opposed to you. Why, what could

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

have made you think so? They have been very kind to you, Mr. Leitzel."

"To me personally, yes; kind and hospitable. But as your suitor? No. Have they not persistently put themselves in the way of my seeing you alone, and thus tried to interfere with my taking from them you and your—taking you from them?" he hastily concluded.

Daniel had been, all through this courtship, strangely, and to himself incomprehensibly, shy about making any inquiries as to Margaret's dowry, though he fairly suffered in the repression of his desire to know what she was "worth." He wondered what it really was that made him tongue-tied whenever he thought of "sounding" her? Perhaps it was that she, on her side, was so persistently reticent not only as to her own property but with regard to *his* possessions. Never had she even hinted any curiosity as to his income, though he had several times led up to the subject in order to give her the necessary opportunity. The matter would, of course, have to be talked out between them *some* time. Daniel was all prepared with his own story; he knew just exactly what statements he was going to "hand out" to his future wife and what he was *not* going to tell. But the strange thing was she didn't seem to feel the least interest in the matter.

When Margaret tried just now to assure him that her relatives' supposed interference with his attentions to her was wholly imaginary, she received her first glimpse of the notorious obstinacy of the little lawyer, and she recognized, with some consternation, that when once an

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

idea had found lodgment in his brain, it was there to stay; no reasoning or proof could dislodge it.

"Since your relatives are opposed to your marrying," he reiterated his conviction at the end of her proofs to the contrary, "I think it would be well if we got married before I returned to New Munich. This would not only save me the expense of another trip South, but would avert any further plotting on the part of your family. I'm afraid to leave the spot," he affirmed, "without taking you with me. Anyway, I *can't*." His face flushed and he fairly caught his breath as he gazed at her. "I'm thinking of you day and night, every hour, every minute! If I went back without you I couldn't work. I'm just crazy about you!"

It was this outburst of feeling that just saved the day for Daniel, his cold-blooded dissection of his penurious motives in his swift lovemaking having almost turned the tide against him.

"If we marry at all," said Margaret in a matter-of-fact tone, "I agree with you that it might as well be at once."

"If at all? Ah!" said Daniel almost coquettishly, "that's to remind me that you haven't accepted me yet? I'm going ahead too fast, am I? My feelings ran away with me, Margaret, for the moment because it's simply unthinkable to me that you should refuse me—I mean, I could not think of life without you now that I know and love you."

"Very well, I'll marry you, Mr. Leitzel. I might as well. But if it is to be done, we shall have to have a quiet wedding, you know."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Calmly as she spoke, the colour dyed her cheeks as she realized the fatal finality of the words she uttered. Deep down in her soul, not clearly recognized by herself, was a vague sense of guilt in the thing she was doing, all her logic to the contrary notwithstanding. For every normal woman feels instinctively that the human relation which may make her a mother, if it is not a sacred and ennobling relation, must be a degrading one, and no experiences of life, however embittering, can ever wholly obliterate this profound intuition. Cynical as were Margaret's theories of love and marriage, she could never have given herself to Daniel Leitzel had she not felt goaded to it by her unfitness to earn her living, and by her sister's desire to have her away. And even these two driving circumstances could not wholly exonerate her to herself from the charge before her conscience of unworthy weakness in taking an easy way out instead of grappling with her difficulty and conquering it, as great souls, she very well knew, have ever done.



## IX

IT WAS the day after Daniel's "proposal" that, as Margaret stood before her bureau in her bedroom dressing to receive her lover, Harriet, who had been quite unable to disguise her satisfaction over the betrothal, knocked at her door and came into her room.

"Can't I help you dress, dear?" she asked kindly.

"Will you hook this thing up the back, please, Hattie?"

"Oh, but you are rash to wear this new chiffon waist, Margaret; chiffon mashes so easily, you know."

"But I'm not going out; I shall not be putting a wrap over it," said Margaret, looking at Harriet in surprise.

"I know you're not going out, but, Margaret, chiffon mashes so *easily*!"

"Well, I'll try to remember not to hold any of the children, though I'd rather mash the waist than forego that pleasure. Still, clothes are scarce and I've got no money for a trousseau——"

"Donkey! This will be your first tête-à-tête with Mr. Leitzel since your engagement, and he's quite crazy about you—and chiffon is most perishable."

Margaret looked at her blankly.

"Do you see *no* connection between the two facts, you goose?" demanded Harriet.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Oh!" exclaimed Margaret. "Now I see what you mean!"

"Really?"

"But, Hattie, dear, you needn't be so—so explicit."

"Explicit!" I nearly had to draw a diagram! Look here, Margaret, you're too thin; there's no excuse for anybody's looking as thin as you do when cotton wadding is so cheap."

"Recommend it to Mr. Leitzel; he's thinner than I am."

"I came in to tell you that Walter has ordered the wedding announcements and they will be finished in ten days; you and I and Mr. Leitzel can meantime be addressing the envelopes. I've drawn up a list of names; you can look over it and see whether I've forgotten any one. You must get Mr. Leitzel's list to-day."

"Very well."

Margaret turned away to her closet to hide the quick tears that sprang to her eyes at her sister's quite cold-blooded eagerness to speed her on her way. Harriet seemed to be almost feverishly fearful that something might intervene to stop the marriage if it were not quickly precipitated.

It was when her betrothed gave her, that evening, a diamond ring, that Margaret's strongest revulsion came to her, so strong that when she had conquered it, by reminding herself again of all the arguments by which she had brought herself to this pass, she had overcome for good and all any last remaining hesitation to accept her doom.

"You may think I was very extravagant, Margaret," Daniel said, as he held her hand and slipped the beautiful

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

jewel upon her finger. "It cost me three hundred dollars. But you see, dear, a diamond is always property; capital safely invested. I'm only too glad and thankful that I can afford to give my affianced bride a costly diamond engagement ring. Is it tight enough?" he anxiously inquired. "I'm afraid it is a little loose; you better have it made tighter; no extra charge for that, they told me at the jeweller's. You might lose it if it's loose."

Margaret had a momentary impulse to tear the ring from her finger and fling it in his face, and such impulses were so foreign to her gentle disposition that she marvelled at herself.

"I'm glad it's property, Daniel," she returned with a perfunctory facetiousness, "for if you don't use me well, I can sell out to Isaac or Israel and run off! Or, if business got dull with you, we could fall back on our diamond ring!"

"*My business get dull!*" he laughed. It was rather delightful to know she was marrying him with so little idea of his great possessions; another proof of the fascination he had always had for ladies, according to Jennie and Sadie.

He was beginning to feel a little nervous at the thought of his sisters. Jennie, especially, would not like it that he was going ahead and getting married without consulting her. Of course, she and Sadie would both see, as soon as they came to know Margaret, that he had, even without their help, "struck a bonanza" in getting such a wife; so sweet-tempered and unselfish, so lovely looking, so healthy, such "a perfect lady," so "refined," except when she said "damn" and "devilish." He must

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

warn her not to forget herself before his sisters—they'd never get over the shock. He had no doubt that eventually Jennie and Sadie would be as delighted with his "choice" as he was himself. He had told them so in his letter to them that day, assuring them that they would find his bride possessed of every quality they had always insisted upon in the girl he made his wife.

It did seem strange not to be able to tell them what Margaret's fortune was. He knew how eager they must be to know. He was beginning to feel very restive himself at not being enlightened on that score.

"Funny how I can't bring myself to ask her about it!" he wondered at himself for the hundredth time. "But she seems so disinterested in her love for me, how can I seem less so in mine for her? It would not look well!"

"Harriet wants you to draw up your list," Margaret here reminded him, "for the wedding announcements; she'd like to have it to-day."

"*Harriet* wants—— Is she running this wedding?" he asked suspiciously.

"Yes, quite so. You and she and I have got to address envelopes all day to-morrow, you know."

"Very well. I have already made out my list. It took a good deal of careful and thoughtful discrimination," he said, drawing a document from his pocket and unfolding it, "though not nearly so much as it would if I were being married in New Munich and having a large wedding. Mere announcements—one doesn't have to draw the line so carefully, you know, as in the case of invitations to one's house."



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

“‘Draw the line?’” repeated Margaret questioningly; for social caste in South Carolina, being less fluid than in Pennsylvania, her family for generations had scarcely even rubbed against people of any other status than its own; and the gradations and shades of social difference with which Daniel had wrestled in making his list was something quite outside her experiences.

“Well, you see, every one we send announcements to,” Daniel elucidated his meaning, “is bound to call on you; only too glad of the chance. And, naturally, you don’t want undesirable people calling on you. If you didn’t return their calls, you would make enemies of them; and while I am so fortunately situated that that would not make any material difference to us, still it is better to avoid making enemies if possible.”

“But—I don’t understand. How do you happen to have acquaintances that are ‘undesirable,’ and in what sense undesirable—so much so as to make it awkward to have to return their calls?”

“Well, for instance, the clerks employed in my office. I think they may perhaps club together and give us a handsome wedding-present if we send them cards. And if they do, I suppose their wives will feel privileged to call.”

“And their wives are ‘undesirable?’ Yes, I suppose I see what you mean. How awfully narrow our lives are, aren’t they? I imagine it might be a very broadening and interesting experience to really make friends with other classes than our own. I’ve never had the shadow of a chance to.”

Daniel’s glow of pride in realizing that he was marrying

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

a woman whose aristocratic ignorance of other classes than her own was so absolute as to make her suppose naïvely that it might be "broadening and interesting" to know such, quite counteracted the disturbing effect of this absurd suggestion. He had only to remember his sisters' long struggle for recognition and their present precarious foothold in New Munich "society" to appreciate to the full the (to him) wonderful fact that his wife and all her "kin," as they called their relatives, "could have it to say" they had always been "at the top."

That such a wife might find his sisters "undesirable" did not occur to him, his sense of his sisters' crudities being dulled by familiarity with them, and his standard of value being so largely a financial one.

"When folks call on you in New Munich, Margaret," said Daniel, "Jennie and Sadie will be a great help to you in telling you whom of your callers you must cultivate and whom you must not."

"But aside from your employees and their wives there would be only your family's friends, of course?" Margaret asked, again puzzled.

"Well, some people prominent in our church, but not in society, and a few others, may bother us some. You need not worry about it; Jennie and Sadie will separate the sheep from the goats for you," he smiled.

"You have told me so little of your people. Your sisters live in New Munich?"

"I ought to have mentioned before this, dear, that my sisters keep house for me. They will continue to live with me."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Oh!" Margaret's heart bounded with a great relief at this information, though even to her own secret consciousness it seemed disloyal to rejoice that she was not going to be thrown alone upon the society of Daniel Leitzel; the prospect had already begun to seem rather appalling.

"No use in our setting up a separate establishment," continued Daniel; "it's so much cheaper for us all to live together, my sisters being such excellent managers."

Margaret, not gathering from this that his sisters shared with him the expense of the "establishment," but concluding, rather, that they were dependent upon him, hastened to assure him that she would not wish him, on her account, to assume the support of two households.

"To tell you the truth, Margaret, I shouldn't know how to get on without Jennie and Sadie, they understand me and all my little habits so well, and they do take such care of my comforts, which is a great thing to a man who constantly uses his brain so strenuously as I do."

Again Margaret inwardly congratulated herself that it would not devolve upon *her* to take care of his comforts and learn all his "little habits," which occupation appeared to her a pitiable waste of a woman's life—in the case of any but a *great* man.

"When I did it for Uncle Osmond," she reflected, "it seemed worth while because of what he was giving to the world almost up to the day of his death."

"The work of a corporation lawyer," she asked Daniel, "is it anything more than a money-making job?"

"Anything *more*?" repeated Daniel, shocked at the

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

suggestion that it *could* be anything more. "Isn't that enough?"

"Dear me, no! When two women spend their lives keeping a man fit for his work, they surely want to know that his work is worth such a price; that it is benefiting society."

"Well, of course, any money-making 'job,' as you call it (I would hardly call my legal work a 'job') must benefit society; if I make money, I not only can support a family but can give to public charities, and to the church."

"There's nothing in that, Daniel; I have studied enough social and political economy to know, as you, too, certainly must know, that society has outgrown the philanthropy and charity idea; has learned to hate philanthropy and charity; people are demanding the right to earn their own way and keep their self-respect."

"I'm afraid, Margaret," said Daniel gravely, "your irreligious uncle gave you some rather unladylike ideas. However," he smiled, "my Christian influence on you, as fond of me as you are, will soon make you forget his infidel teachings. For goodness' sake, dear, don't forget yourself and repeat such atheistic thoughts before my sisters or indeed to any one in New Munich. Our best society is very critical."

It flashed upon Margaret to wonder, with a sudden sense of despair, what her uncle would have said to her marrying Daniel Leitzel.

"If I don't do it quickly, I can't hold out!" she miserably thought.



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

But she realized that she confronted a worse fate in the alternative of remaining with Hattie.

"How old are your sisters?" she asked.

"They are both elderly women, though as vigorous as they ever were."

Margaret told herself that she would be so much kinder to them than Hattie had ever been to her. "They shall never feel unwelcome in my home," she resolved.

"Are they your only relatives in New Munich?" she inquired.

"In New Munich, yes. But Hiram lives in Millerstown nearby."

"Your parents are not living?"

"My mother—no, my parents are not living."

"You seem not quite sure," she smiled.

Daniel coloured uncomfortably. The thought of his Mennonite step-mother gave him his first humiliating sense of inferiority to a Berkeley of Berkeley Hill. What a shock it would be to "a perfect lady" like Margaret if she ever met the old woman! He would try to avert such a stab to his self-respect.

"I suppose," he thought with some bitterness, "I can't get out of telling her about mother; she's bound to hear of her some time, and even perhaps meet her."

"I have a step-mother," he said testily.

"She lives in New Munich?"

"No, fifteen miles out in the country. We don't see much of her."

"I don't see her name here," said Margaret, glancing down the list he had given her.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"No; it won't be necessary to send her a card."

"You are not friendly with her? She was not a good step-mother to you?"

"Oh, yes; no one could be unfriendly with her—that is, she's an inoffensive, good-hearted old woman. But—well, we see very little of her; she's not a blood-relative, you know."

"But surely, if you are not at daggers' points with her, you would send your father's widow an announcement of your wedding!"

"But—we don't think very much of her, Margaret; we're not, just to say, intimate with her."

"You say, though, that she is 'inoffensive and good-hearted,' and she was your father's wife?" repeated Margaret, looking mystified.

"Oh, well," Daniel gave in, "I'll add her name if you think I—I ought to. She'll be so pleased; she'll tell it all over the township! I mean"—he pulled himself up—"well, you see, she's old and no use to any one and I'm afraid she's going to be, after a while, something of a burden to us all."

Margaret remained silent, as Daniel took a pencil from his vest-pocket and scribbled at the end of his wedding list.

"There," he said, handing the paper back to her. "Anything to please you, my dear!"

"Daniel?"

"Well, dearest?"

"I don't like the way you speak of that old lady."

"But haven't I consented to send cards to her, Margaret?"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Yes. And I'm sure that a man who loves children as you do, who gives money to charities and the church, as you tell me you do, couldn't be thoughtless of the aged. I don't want to believe you could."

"No, indeed! I gave one hundred dollars last year to our U. B. Church Home for Old Ladies." He drew out his purse, extracted a newspaper clipping, and passed it to her, "My name heads the list, you see."

"Oh, Daniel, and you were going to neglect to send an announcement of your wedding to the 'aged, inoffensive, kind-hearted, but useless and burdensome' widow of your father!"

"But, Margaret," he protested, his self-esteem wincing at her disapproval, "if ever you see her, you'll not blame me! You'll understand. Anyway, family sentiment among you Southerners is so much stronger, I've always been told, than with us in the North."

"I'm sure it must be."

"My step-mother is too poor, too, to send us a wedding present," he added as a mitigating reason for his "neglect."

Margaret, having no conception of his penuriousness (he seemed so lavishly generous to her), took such speeches as this for a childish simplicity, the eccentricity of legal genius, perhaps. Had she known that he actually felt it wasteful to invest an expensively engraved card and a stamp where there would be no return of any kind, she would have advised him to consult an alienist.

Little did she and Daniel dream that the sending of that wedding announcement to old Mrs. Leitzel of Martz Township was going to make history for the entire Leitzel family.

## X

THE marriage of Daniel Leitzel took place in the fall, and during all the following winter New Munich kept up its lively interest in the bride, and discussed freely and constantly her personality, looks, manner, clothes, opinions, and, most impressive of all, her unique style of speech on occasions; it also speculated boldly and with the keenest curiosity as to how she "got on" with Danny and her "in-laws."

As the *Weekly Intelligencer* had predicted, many "social events" celebrated the marriage. To entertain the bride and groom came to be such a social distinction that people vied with each other in the extravagant elaborateness of their parties; and not to have met Mrs. Leitzel proved one to be socially obscure.

To the men of New Munich it was a "seven days' wonder" that a woman of such charm and distinction should have "tied up" with a man like Dan.

"How did a weasel like Dan Leitzel ever put it over a girl like *that*? Why, he's at least twice her age!"

But the women, noting that the bride's clothes with the exception of her two evening gowns, however graceful and becoming, were home-made, and that though the lace on some of them was real and rare, it was very old, did not wonder so much at the marriage.



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"She is certainly making a hit with New Munich," was the verdict at first. "Isn't she the very dearest thing that ever happened?"

Margaret's amiable, sympathetic manner, her simplicity, her occasional drollery, the distinction of her fine breeding, fascinated these people of a different tradition and fibre.

"No wonder Danny Leitzel looks like another man!" his acquaintances commented. "Why, he's taking on flesh! He looks ten years younger! Do you notice how spryly he walks? And how radiantly he beams on everybody, the old skinflint! Yes, he certainly had his usual luck when he got that young wife of his!"

It was another cause for wonder and widespread comment that the maiden sisters, too, looked brighter and younger since the advent of their brother's bride.

"They're awfully proud of her and of the fuss being made over her and Danny! Who would have dreamed that Miss Jennie and Miss Sadie could get on peaceably with their brother's wife, living in the same house with her! It seems unbelievable."

"Oh, wait! She's a new thing just now, but wait! We shall presently see and hear—*what* we shall see and hear! If they get on peaceably, I'll warrant it's not because Miss Jennie and Miss Sadie are angels. It's Mrs. Danny that's so awfully easy-going they *can't* quarrel with her. But of course it can't possibly last. If she is easy-going, she isn't a jelly-fish. They're bound to clash after a while. You'll see what you'll see!"

"Even the bride herself looks happy," one maiden

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

pensively remarked. "I shouldn't think she would. I couldn't have married Dan Leitzel."

"You don't know what you might have done *if tempted*," a friend of the maiden pointedly suggested.

"But she seems to be devoted to Danny. She really acts so."

"Oh, that's just her Southern warmth of manner. Don't take *that* seriously. As if a stunning girl like that could be in love with *him*!"

"But I heard she was poor and dependent and that Danny's devotion and goodness to her made her just adore him! An old man's darling, you know!"

There were only one or two people who, more observant than communicative, noted that Mrs. Leitzel, though lazily good-humoured and apparantly happy, had a strained expression in her large, soft eyes, a veiled, elusive look of trouble, almost of suffering.

Meantime, the people of New Munich were not more astonished than were Daniel's sisters themselves at the relation which they found themselves sustaining toward his wife. It had taken only a few days of association with Margaret to disarm them of their stiffness, suspicion, and jealousy of their brother's devotion to her. They found her so surprisingly willing to take second place in her husband's house, so disinclined to usurp any of the prerogatives which they had so long enjoyed (and which they knew most people would think should now be hers) that in spite of many things about her which they could not understand or approve, they presently succumbed to the subtle spell of her magnetism and her docility and became

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

almost as enthusiastic about her as was Danny himself.

Long and earnest were the discussions they held in secret over her.

"Her clothes are so plain," lamented Sadie. "You could hardly call 'em such a trussoo, could you? All she's got is just her travelling suit with two silk waists, two house dresses, one afternoon dress, and two evening dresses. And her underclothes ain't fancy like a bride's. When I asked her to show me her wedding underclothes, she said she didn't get any new, she hadn't needed any! To be sure, what she has got is awful fine linen and hand embroidered, but it ain't made a bit fancy and no coloured ribbons at. All plain white," said Sadie in a tone of keen disappointment.

"And her evening dresses," said Jennie; "she says the lace on 'em she 'inherited.' Putting old second-hand lace on your wedding outfit yet! I told her I'd anyhow think she'd buy new for her wedding outfit. And she said, 'But I couldn't afford to buy lace like this. My great-grandmother wore this lace on a ball gown.'"

"She ain't ashamed to say right out she can't afford this and that," said Sadie wonderingly.

"Well, to be sure, that's just to us, and we're her folks now. She'd know better than to say it outside."

"Well, I guess anyhow *then*!" Sadie fervently hoped.

"But it looks as if she didn't *have* much, don't it?"

"I'm afraid it does." Sadie shook her head.

"What I want to know is, did she or didn't she bring Danny *anything*?" Jennie worried.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"It's hard to say," sighed Sadie.

"I don't like to ask her right out, just yet anyhow. After a while I will mebbby," said Jennie.

"She's wonderful genteel, the most genteel lady I ever saw," remarked Sadie. "And how she speaks her words so pretty! *Buttah* for butter; and *hoase* for house. It sounds grand, don't it?"

"It's awful high-toned," Jennie granted. "I wonder what Hiram's Lizzie will have to say when she sees her once. Won't Lizzie look common anyhow, alongside of her?"

"Well, I guess!"

"Hiram will have more jealous feelings than ever when he sees what a genteel lady Danny picked out; ain't?"

"Yes, anyhow!"

"And that makes something, too, being high-toned that way; it makes near as much as money," said Jennie thoughtfully.

"Still, I don't believe Danny would have married her if she hadn't *anything*," Sadie speculated.

"Well, I guess not, too, mebbby. I *hope* not. It's next Sabbath we're invited to Millerstown to spend the day at Hiram's, you mind?" she told Sadie; "if only you don't take the cold or have the headache," she added, insisting always upon regarding Sadie as an invalid to be coddled.

"You know, Jennie, Danny always says he has so ashamed for our Hiram's common table manners. I guess he won't like it, either, before Margaret that Hiram eats so common, for all he's a minister."

"Yes, well, but supposing she met *Mom* by chance,



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

what would she think? Danny better consider of *that* before he worries over our Hiram."

"Yes, I guess, too," Sadie agreed.

Meantime, Margaret, during these first months after her marriage, was living through a succession of spiritual upheavals and epochs which, under a calm and even phlegmatic exterior, were completely hidden from those about her.

Her earliest impressions in her new and strange environment at the Leitzels' home in New Munich were confused and bewildering; for so isolated and narrow had her life hitherto been, that vulgarity in any form had never, up to this time, touched or come nigh her, and she did not understand it, did not know how to meet or cope with it.

But the second stage of her experience, as the situation became less confused, more definite, was, in spite of Daniel's devotion to her, for which she was grateful, a transitory sense of humiliation, of mortification, that she had married into a family that was "straight-out common"—she, a Berkeley. It was probably the first time in her life that she had ever given a thought to the fact that she was a Berkeley. But since to a Southerner of good family, to be well-born was a detail of inestimable importance, she had naturally assumed that any man whom Walter brought into his home and presented to her and Hattie must be worthy of that honour. It was on this assumption that so many of Daniel's peculiarities had failed to mean to her what she could now see they meant—sheer commonness. *Why* had Walter taken it for granted so easily that because a man was a successful and promi-

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

nent lawyer he was a gentleman? Yes, her own sister's husband had let her go so far as to *marry* into a family of whom he knew either too little or too much!

"I trusted Walter so entirely, I didn't even think of questioning him on such a matter!" she reflected with some bitterness upon his willingness to sacrifice her in order to preserve the peace of his own home.

"There are two kinds of lower class people, common people and people who are only just plain," she philosophized. "If Daniel's family were just plain, I could take them to my heart and be glad for the broadening experience of knowing and loving them. I could get over my prejudices about blood—I recognize that they *are* prejudices—and I wouldn't even mind his sisters' peculiarities. But they are not just plain. They are—— Oh, my good Lord!" she almost moaned, covering her face with her hands.

However, all the experiences of Margaret's life had taught her, through very severe discipline, to accept philosophically whatever circumstances fell to her lot and to extract from alien conditions whatever of comfort could possibly be found in them. So, the third stage of the strenuous crisis through which she was passing was more cheerful. She found herself so interested in the novelty of the life and characters about her that it began to seem like the open page of an absorbing story. Indeed, so interested did she become, that for a time she forgot to think of it all in its relation to her own life. That phase was destined to be forced upon her later with added poignancy. But for the time being, even the fearfully

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

vulgar taste of Daniel's house and its furnishings, the like of which she had never beheld, and Sadie's youthful *toilettes*—her empire gowns, middie blouses with Windsor ties, and hats with little velvet streamers down the back—served only to greatly entertain her.

"Sadie was always such a fancy dresser that way," Jennie would explain with pride. "Yes, she's a girl that's wonderful for dress."

Jennie's invariable reference to her younger sister as "a girl" seemed intended to carry out the idea of Sadie's sixteen-year-old style of dress.

"I suppose one couldn't make Sadie understand," thought Margaret, "that she'd be better dressed with *one* frock of good material, simply and suitably made, than with all that huge closet full of cheap trash."

But she was wise enough not to attempt reforms, or even suggestions, in any direction, in her new home.

In view of the fact that Daniel's sisters lived here dependent upon him, as Margaret supposed, Sadie's abundant finery seemed to her rather extravagant. "He's a very indulgent brother," she decided.

Walter's wedding gift to her had been a check for fifty dollars, which she was sure he must have borrowed on his life insurance. She was at present using this for pocket money. It was characteristic of her not to give one anxious thought to the time when it would all be spent. She was scarcely aware of the fact that the subject of money had never yet come up between her and Daniel, and she would have been amazed indeed to know how often her husband tried in vain to broach the topic which

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

was to him of such paramount importance, and to her so negligible a detail in a life full of interests that had nothing to do with money.

The attitude of Daniel's sisters toward him seemed to Margaret not by any means the least of the curiosities of her new life: their obsequious admiration of him, their abject obedience to every least wish of his, their minute attention to his physical comforts and to the fussy details of his daily routine, from his morning bath up to his glass of hot milk at bedtime.

"And they've done this all his life! No wonder he's a——"

But she checked, even to her own consciousness, any admission of what she really thought he was.

Daniel, meantime, discovering through the many social affairs to which he took his bride that she was so greatly admired by the men of his world as to make them look upon him with envy (and to be looked upon with envy was sweet to his soul), opened up his heart and his purse to the extent of suggesting to his wife and his sisters that they celebrate his marriage and return the lavish hospitality that had been extended to them in New Munich by giving a large reception.

It was one Saturday afternoon as they all sat together in the "sitting-room" after their midday dinner, Daniel's offices being closed on Saturday afternoon to give his large staff of clerks a half holiday. Jennie had pushed Daniel's own easy-chair to the open fire for him, and he was lounging in it luxuriously.

"And I'm going to do it up in style. I'll have a caterer



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

from Philadelphia," he announced, to the astonishment of his sisters.

"Oh, Danny, a caterer yet!" breathed Sadie, awestruck.

"It'll come awful high, Danny!" Jennie warned him.

"I know it will. I know that. But all the same I'm going to *do* it!" responded Daniel heroically.

"Well," said Jennie, "I hope you'll tell the caterer, Danny, not to give us one of these lap-suppers the kind they had at Mrs. Congressman Ocksreider's, you mind. I like to sit up to a table when I eat. Mrs. Ocksreider's so stout, she hasn't *got* a lap, and it looked awful inconvenient to her. Oh, it was *swell* enough, to be sure, but you didn't get very full. We didn't overload our stomachs, I can tell you."

"We'll have small tables, then," Daniel agreed.

"Sadie," Jennie suddenly ordered her sister solicitously, "sit out of the window draft or you'll get the cold in your head yet."

Sadie obediently pulled her chair away from the window.

"I'm thirsty," Daniel announced; and at the word Jennie rose.

"I'll fetch you a drink, Danny."

In a moment she returned and stood by her brother's chair while he leisurely sipped the water she had brought him. This spectacle, a man's remaining seated while a woman stood, to which Margaret was becoming accustomed, had at first seemed to her quite awful.

"And you, Margaret," Daniel said as he sipped his water, "must have a new dress—gown, as you call it—for the party. You have worn those same two evening

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

dresses of yours to about enough parties, I guess. Let Sadie help you choose a new one. And get something elegant and showy. I won't mind the cost. Sadie, you'll know what she ought to get; her own taste is too plain. I want her to do me credit!" he grinned, returning the empty glass to Jennie, who took it away.

"I'll help you pick out just the right thing," responded Sadie, eager for the orgy of planning a new evening costume, while Margaret, as she glanced at Sadie's ill-fitting, gay plaid blouse of cheap silk, made by a cheap seamstress, and at the coquettish patch of black court plaster off her left eye, concealed her amusement at her vision of herself in a garb of her sister-in-law's devising.

"Daniel," she suddenly said, wishing to divert the talk from clothes, and curious, also, to "try out" her husband on a certain point, "I'm thirsty."

Daniel, not yet very far recovered from the attentive lover stage, jumped up at once to get her a drink, quite as he would have done before their marriage, and Margaret smiled as she saw Jennie and Sadie look shocked at what she knew they felt to be her very unwifely attitude.

"My dears," she told them while Daniel was gone, "I've got to try to keep him in training, you spoil him so dreadfully."

"How high dare she go, Danny, for her new dress?" Sadie inquired when her brother returned with the water.

"Well, what do *you* pay for a party dress?"

"My new white silk cost me sixteen-fifty."

"That's a showy, handsome dress all right. You may spend twenty dollars, Margaret," he said magnanimously.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"We'll go downtown right after breakfast on Monday morning, Margaret," said Sadie, "and pick out the goods and take it to Mrs. Snyder, my dressmaker. She charges five dollars to make a dress, but she gives you your money's worth; she makes them so nice and fancy. Your dresses ain't fussed up enough, Margaret."

Margaret wondered what would be the effect upon them if she told them that just the mere making of one of her "plain" gowns, by a good dressmaker, had cost nearly twice what Daniel "allowed" her for the goods, "findings," and making of a new one. But she decided to spare them the shock.

"Simple clothes suit me better," she said. "Unless I go to a high-priced dressmaker, I can do much better making my gowns myself."

"But I don't begrudge the high price, Margaret," urged Daniel; "you let Sadie's Mrs. Snyder make you a dress."

"Yes," said Jennie with decision, "you can't appear among our friends any more, Margaret, in such plain-looking dresses as you've been wearing. It would really give me a shamed face if you weren't so—well, even in plain clothes, you're awful aristocratic looking, and you'll look just grand in the dress Sadie's Mrs. Snyder will make you for five dollars."

Though Margaret was perfectly willing to take a subordinate place in her husband's household, she no more dreamed of his sisters interfering in her personal affairs than she thought of interfering with theirs, so in spite of Jennie's authoritative tone, she answered pleasantly:

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Too bad you don't like my Mennonite taste, for you know, I'd love to adopt the 'plain' garb of these Mennonite women and girls one sees on the streets on market days. What could be more quaint and fetching than their spotless white caps on their glossy hair? Ah, I think they're a sly lot, these Mennonite girls. Don't tell *me* they don't know how bewitching they look in their unworldly garb intended to put down woman's natural vanity! So I won't get a new gown just now."

"Why not, when Danny offers you the money?" asked Sadie, astonished, while Jennie frowned disapprovingly.

"Here," said Daniel, taking a bank book and a fountain pen from his pocket, and rapidly making out a check, "you take this, Margaret, and let Sadie's Mrs. Snyder make you a nice party dress."

Margaret laughed a little as she took the check, feeling it useless to explain to them how impossible it would be to buy with twenty dollars, even at a bargain sale, anything so beautiful as her two gowns made by a skilled and artistic designer and trimmed with her great-grandmother's Brussels rose point.

Daniel looked chagrined and his sisters rather indignantly surprised that she did not thank him for the money. He thought he was being tremendously generous. But Margaret, inasmuch as they had been married two months and this was the first money he had offered her, received it as a matter of course; her husband had, at the altar, endowed her with his "worldly goods" and what was his was hers; that was her quite simple view of their financial relation.



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"I don't want to spend this on a gown, Daniel," she said to the consternation of her hearers, as she tucked it into the bosom of her blouse, "for I don't need any; the ones I have are really all right, my dear; far better than anything I've seen on any woman in New Munich."

"But I gave it to you for a frock!" Daniel exclaimed, his eyes bulging. "I want you to have a fancy, dressy frock for our reception."

"My dear," Margaret patted his bald head, "you know a lot more about law than about a woman's frocks. You leave that to me."

Before he could reply, the one maid of the household entered the room, and presented a card-plate to Jennie.

"More callers—what a pile!" said Jennie as she took ten cards from the plate.

"Yes, and it's only one lady in the parlour settin'!" exclaimed the Pennsylvania Dutch maid. "It wonders me that she gives me so many tickets!"

"Well, would you look, Danny! If it ain't Miss Hamilton!" exclaimed Jennie with a contemptuous shrug. "Ain't she got nerve!"

"What! Well, well! Tut, tut, tut!—my stenographer calling on my wife! Yi, yi! Because she and her parents sent us a little bit of a vase for a wedding gift, she has the presumption to think she can make your acquaintance, my dear!"

"That exquisite little Venetian glass vase!" said Margaret eagerly. "It's one of the loveliest gifts we received."

"It looks as if it cost fifty cents," commented Jennie. "And they're not just to say poor either; her father is the

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

high school principal and her mother's the Episcopal Church organist."

"But why ten cards," asked Daniel, "if she came by herself?"

"Her father's and mother's cards as well as her own; and for all of us," explained Margaret as she glanced over them.

"And is that the proper way to do?" asked Daniel, impressed.

"It is in South Carolina; I can't answer for New Munich."

"*Her* puttin' on airs like that!" wondered Sadie, "when they ain't in society."

Margaret rose to go to the parlour. "Are you coming?" she asked of Jennie and Sadie.

"We are not acquainted with our Danny's hired clerk," said Jennie primly, "and don't wish to be. I'll call the hired girl back and tell her to excuse you, Margaret, and us, too."

"No, I want to meet Miss Hamilton. I've been anxious to make the acquaintance of the giver of that rare little vase; she must be a person of taste. Shall I, then, excuse you?" she asked the other two women, moving a step toward the door. But Daniel took her hand to detain her. "Have yourself excused; I'd rather you did; it's not well to mix business and society. It was bold of Miss Hamilton to come here, and we must not encourage her to come again."

Strangely enough, this sort of a contingency had not arisen before, for the simple reason that on every occasion,

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

hitherto, when people had called whom Jennie and Sadie considered undesirable acquaintances for her, Margaret had happened to be out. They had either just thrown away the cards of such visitors, or had explained to Margaret that she must not return their visits. Margaret had not discussed the matter with them, but had kept the addresses of every visitor of whom she was informed, intending, of course, to call upon them all as soon as New Munich "society" would cease from its siege of entertaining her.

"But, Daniel," she patiently answered him, "I'm quite serious in telling you that a person who could select such a thing of beauty as that Venetian vase, I'm sure I shall find much more interesting than—than some of the people I've been meeting, kind and hospitable though they've been."

"But it's very bad policy to encourage familiarity in subordinates. She *works* for me, Margaret."

"Don't you see, Daniel, that's why it behooves me *not* to be excused to her?" she smiled, withdrawing her hand, patting his cheek, and sailing out of the room.

"But, Margaret!" he called after her, only to hear her voice in the room beyond greeting, with her Southern cordiality, his hired secretary.

Daniel looked the annoyance and astonishment he felt. If she *would* see Miss Hamilton, against his expressed wish, she needn't treat her like an equal—actually gush over her. Why! hear the two of them laughing and chattering over there in the parlour! She might at least be reserved and on her dignity with people beneath her.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"For goodness' sake, tell your wife, Danny," spoke in Jennie, voicing his own thought, "not to make herself so friendly and common to everybody. *Your* wife don't have to! She has the right to be a little proud with people. I tell her, still, when callers come, 'To this one you can be as common as you want; but to this one, not so common.' But she don't seem to understand; leastways, she don't listen to me; she's the same to everybody, *whether* or no. Or else she's just as likely as not to make herself common with a person like this Miss Hamilton and be awful quiet and indifferent-like with Mrs. Congressman Ocksreider and her daughter, or Judge Miller's family! You better talk to her and tell her what's what."

"It's funny," said Daniel, puzzled, "that she wouldn't know that much without being told."

"Yes, I think, then!" said Jennie, "and her as tony a person as what she seems to be."

"Yes, anyhow!" corroborated Sadie.

"Her being so friendly with *everybody*," continued Jennie, "is likely to make trouble when we come to send out invitations for your grand party. To be sure, the ones she made herself so common with will look to be invited; ain't?"

"But I want the party to be very exclusive, mind!" warned Daniel.

"To be sure you do. Trust me to see to that," promised Jennie.

"Will you hear those two in there laughing together like two school-girls!" wondered Sadie. "My goodness! And Miss Hamilton working for you for eight dollars a week!"



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"I've had to raise her to ten," said Danny ruefully. "A lawyer in Lancaster offered her fifteen, and I couldn't let her go, she's too useful; so much better educated than the general run of stenographers. If she didn't prefer to live in New Munich with her parents, I'd have to compete with big city prices to keep her."

"Is she that smart, Danny?" Jennie asked, a touch of respect in her tone, her estimate of Miss Hamilton rising just two dollars' worth. "They say, too, that her father's such a smart high school teacher. Yes, they say the school board had to raise his salary, too, to keep him."

"It's very bad," said Daniel thoughtfully, "to have people who work for you know how valuable they are to you. Miss Hamilton knows she's worth money to me and so she gives herself airs—acts sometimes as though *she* hired *me* at ten dollars a week!—and then has the presumption to come here and call on my wife! I'd fire her if I could get any one *half* as good. But she knows she's got the whip-handle. It's much better, much better, for an employee to feel *uncertain* of his or her place. By the way," he added, drawing a purse from his pocket and taking a dollar from it, "you know we're all to go to Millerstown to have dinner at Hiram's to-morrow, so you'd better go out this afternoon, girls, and buy some presents for the four children. Here's a dollar—that's from Margaret and me; and if you each give fifty cents, that will make two dollars: enough to buy a nice little present for each one of them from all of us."

"All right, Danny," responded Jennie, taking the dollar. "I can get red booties for the baby, a hair ribbon for

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Naomi, a game for Zwingli, and a story book for Christian. Won't they be pleased?"

"And now," said Daniel, taking out his watch, "I've got just an hour to spare—let us make out the list of names for our party; for when Miss Hamilton goes, I'm going to 'phone for an automobile and take Margaret out for a little ride, and talk to her about some things."

## XI

MARGARET'S instinct for self-preservation, being rapidly educated along new lines since her marriage, closed her lips in the presence of Jennie and Sadie upon the great delight she found in her new acquaintance, her husband's secretary; for though the standards of value which the Leitzels held as to most things in life had at first seemed to her incomprehensible, she was of late beginning to have a glimmering understanding of them. So, upon returning to the sitting-room after Miss Hamilton's call, she repressed any expression of her happiness, and not until she and Daniel were alone in the automobile which he had hired this afternoon for her pleasure, and incidentally for his own, did she speak of it. She had not yet learned the necessity of hiding from him, also, almost everything that she felt and thought.

"This is a red letter day for me, Daniel. I've found a friend! I've never had an intimate girl friend—oh! but I've yearned for one! Of all the many people I've met since I came here, there hasn't been one except that Miss Mary Aucker, who has since gone to Boston for the winter, whose society I'd prefer to that of a book or solitude. I'm not naturally a very good 'mixer,' I'm afraid, but in ten minutes Miss Hamilton and I—well, we simply *found* each other, deep down where we both live! It's such a

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

novel and wonderful experience to me!" she softly exclaimed, her eyes shining. "It's going to give me the greatest happiness I've ever known!"

"The greatest happiness you've ever known! Why, Margaret——"

"I mean that I've ever known with a woman," she said soothingly.

"But, my dear!" he exclaimed, "what can you be thinking of? You can't make a friend of *my secretary*!"

"If she is a lady?"

"But she isn't. They don't go anywhere, these Hamiltons!"

"They are a cultured New England family, Daniel, and if they don't go into society here, it is probably because they don't want to. I'm sure I can't imagine why they *should* want to. I don't mean, dear," she quickly added, not at all sincerely, "to cast any reflection upon your New Munich society; I'm speaking of society in general. It is rather unsatisfactory, isn't it? I wouldn't give up the friendship I'm going to have with Miss Hamilton for all the rest of New Munich society, I assure you."

"But you must give it up! Why, my dear, the Hamiltons are *renters*!"

"'Renters?'"

"Yes, renters!"

"What are 'renters?'"

"You know what I mean—they don't own the house they live in, they rent it."

"Oh!" Margaret fell back laughing against the seat of the car. "Of course if I had known that, Daniel, I



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

shouldn't have found Miss Hamilton congenial, sympathetic, and companionable. Oh, Daniel!" she gasped with laughing.

But Daniel's sense of humour was not developed.

"You must be on your guard more, my dear," he gravely warned her, "or you will be getting yourself involved most uncomfortably with troublesome people. Do let Jennie and Sadie be your guides as to whom you should cultivate here and whom keep at a proper distance."

"Jennie and Sadie be my—select my friends for me?"

"Instruct you as to those *among* whom you may select for yourself," he amended it. "They know New Munich and you don't."

"And they," thought Margaret wonderingly, "think themselves 'above' a cultured, sophisticated, well-bred girl like Miss Hamilton—they!"

"But, Daniel," she asked, genuinely puzzled, "that nice little woman that called yesterday, that I liked so much, said her husband was a grocer. I confess it rather shocked me. But you all seemed to approve of *her*. In New Munich is a grocer better than a teacher?"

"He's a wholesale grocer, which makes a vast difference, of course."

"Does it? And was the drygoods person who was with her also wholesale?"

"Mrs. Frantz? No, but she's rich, very rich. They own their handsome home at the head of our block. Listen, Margaret! While you were in the parlour with Miss Hamilton, Jennie and Sadie helped me make up the list for our party, and even I myself could not have

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

discriminated more astutely than they did (Jennie especially) as to whom we ought to invite and whom we ought not. On Monday I'll have one of my office clerks address the envelopes for the invitations on a typewriter."

"Oh, my God, Daniel! You can't send typewritten invitations!"

"For goodness' sake, Margaret, cut out *swearing*! I'd be horribly mortified if any one heard you!"

Margaret was silent.

Daniel turned to glance at her uneasily, fearing he had offended her, but she was red with suppressed laughter and as she met his eye it broke forth in a little squeal.

"Oh, Daniel," she sighed, "swearing isn't as bad as slang, dear. I'd much rather hear you say 'Damn it' than 'cut it out.'"

She looked so pretty in her sable furs, another inheritance from an ancestor, that, the automobile being covered, he seized her face in his two hands and held his lips to hers for a long minute.

"Daniel," she said when he at last released her, "remind me to look over the list before you send the invitations. I may want to add some names."

"I don't think you will, dear. We drew up the list very carefully."

"I'll glance over it."

"But, Margaret," he firmly insisted, "the list is complete as it stands. You can't add any name to it that would not be objectionable to my sisters and me."

"I understand that the party is to be a large general affair, not small and exclusive? In that case, you know,

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

we shall have to invite every one who has called and sent us gifts."

"Impossible! Why, our butcher sent us a gilt-framed Snow-Scene! and Sadie's dressmaker a souvenir spoon!"

"Then at least we must invite every one who has called on me."

"By no means. Wait until you have lived here long enough to have gotten your bearings and you'll see how right Jennie and Sadie and I are in drawing the line so carefully."

Margaret wisely desisted from further discussion of the matter, though she felt troubled by her conviction that she would certainly not find on that list the names of the few women of the town who had really interested her and who were probably "renters" or self-supporting or something else which, by the Leitzel standard, would class them with "dogs and sorcerers." But it was she and Daniel who were giving the party, and even though Jennie and Sadie did keep house for them, she was of course the nominal mistress of her husband's home and responsible for the courtesy or discourtesy extended to their acquaintances; and she did not like the idea of being made to appear a petty snob in the eyes of the few people of New Munich for whose opinion of her she cared. But what could she do about it?

"The people they seem to approve of have been the most vulgar who have called on me," she reflected. "And the few persons of breeding and education I've met here they have flouted. Yet I recognize the delicacy of their position—Jennie's and Sadie's—living here in their brother's

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

house and dependent upon him. I don't want to assert myself in a way to make them feel their dependence. What *can* I do?"

"Another thing, Margaret," said Daniel in a tone of authority, "I want to ask you *not* to make yourself common with people beneath you."

"Make myself 'common?'"

"Why, you are as common with my secretary as you are with Mrs. Ocksreider or Mrs. and Miss Miller!"

"I'm 'common?'"

"Don't you think you are?"

"Well, in Charleston we weren't considered just to say common people, Daniel, though perhaps we were over-estimated."

"Good heavens, Margaret, I don't mean that you *yourself* are common; I certainly wouldn't have married you if I had thought that. I mean you make yourself—well, too democratic. That's what I mean, too democratic."

"The prerogative of the well-born, Daniel, who don't feel the *necessity* for snobbishness. Have you fixed the date for the party?"

"Yes, the twenty-second; three weeks from yesterday. I'll have the house decorated by a Lancaster florist and I'll have a caterer from Philadelphia." He repeated with relish his astonishing intention.

"But, Daniel, are you sure we can afford all that?"

He laughed exultantly. "Well, my dear, I've never given a large party and I'm going to impress the town! It will be the swellest thing that was ever given here! Why shouldn't it be? I can afford it—that is," he pulled



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

himself up, "I can afford it *once* in a while, and," he added with feeling, "I'm celebrating the happiest event of my whole life. You're worth all that it will cost, Margaret!"

"Thanks!"

"You're welcome, my dear."

"We must invite your step-mother to the party, Daniel."

A slight start expressed Daniel's disturbed surprise at this unexpected suggestion.

"She's too old and too—well, too unworldly."

He winced from the discovery that Margaret must some time make, that his step-mother was a Mennonite, talked Pennsylvania Dutch, was wholly uneducated and, in short, a disgrace to the Leitzel family.

"We must send her a card, Daniel, whether she comes or not."

"No, no; she might take a notion *to* come!"

"But that would be lovely! I am so fond of old ladies. Why do you say 'No?'"

"I don't want her 'round!" he snapped fretfully. "Don't send her an invitation! She lives only fifteen miles from here and I do believe she'd *come* if she were invited, she's so proud of being related to us! You see, Margaret," he added, preparing the way a bit, "she's not exactly our equal, I'm sorry to tell you."

"Then," thought Margaret, "she's undoubtedly a very superior woman!"

"Daniel!" she suddenly proposed, "if she lives only fifteen miles away, let's motor out to see her."

"We haven't time," said Daniel shortly.

"Some other time then? I'd like to meet her."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Perhaps."

"Won't she be at Hiram's to-morrow at the family party at Millerstown?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because Hiram won't invite her. We have very little to do with her, my dear, except to give her her home."

"*You* do that?" She wondered at the number of people he supported.

"Well, she lives in our old home near our coal lands. We don't charge her any rent."

"I'm going out to see her some time, Daniel. Since you don't care to visit her, I'll take Miss Hamilton. I'd like to see your coal lands and your old home."

Daniel looked apoplectic. "Margaret!" he gasped. "Listen to me! Don't speak to any one of my step-mother! Hardly any one knows we have one and we don't want them to know it."

"Gracious! Why not?"

"We're ashamed of her, Margaret. She's not a lady, though I don't see why that should reflect on us, since she isn't a blood relation. And as to Miss Hamilton, haven't I made it clear to you that it would humiliate me unbearably to have my wife seen in company with my stenographer?"

"Oh, but, Daniel, my dear, because her family are 'renters?' There, there," she patted him, "don't worry about me. I'm twenty-five years old, you know, and am surely competent to choose my own friends. And it's better to be renters than rotters. Let us go home, now,

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

will you? It's getting late, and I'm cold—and hungry. Jennie promised us buckwheat cakes for supper. Tell me all about your brother Hiram's family," she added when Daniel had ordered the chauffeur to turn home. "How many children has he? I'll be so glad to get some children into my arms again—I'm so awfully homesick for Hattie's babies!"

There was a little catch in her voice and Daniel answered sympathetically: "I'd like to see Hattie's babies again myself! They certainly are nice little children—the most aristocratic looking children, Margaret, I ever saw. I hope," he lowered his voice, "that *our* children will be as aristocratic looking."

Margaret closed her eyes for an instant as though to shut out some things she did not wish to see.

"How many children?" she repeated after a moment.

"Four: Zwingli, Naomi, Christian, and Daniel. Daniel, the baby, is my namesake of course. You see, Hiram had about decided I wasn't going to marry and that having no children of my own, I'd do well by my namesake. But," Daniel chuckled, "I fooled him, didn't I?"

"Do you like his wife?"

"Oh, yes, he did very well, very well indeed. Lizzie's worth thirty thousand dollars."

He paused expectantly. Here was Margaret's chance to speak up and tell him what *she* was worth.

"If she's worth that much," was Margaret's comment, "she certainly ought to be all wool and a yard wide. But I asked whether you liked her."

"Why, yes, she's a good wife," returned Daniel, dis-

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

appointed, his tone dejected. *Why* couldn't he make Margaret talk property? "Hiram married the richest woman in Millerstown. And she's a very capable and economical woman, too. You'll hear my brother preach to-morrow," he added with pride, cheering up a bit. "He's a fine preacher. So considered in Millerstown. If he had gone into the ministry younger, he'd have made his mark in his profession just as I have done in the law; but he was nearly thirty when he began to study. Yes," said Daniel as the car drew up at their door, "you'll hear a great sermon when you hear my brother Hiram preach."



## XII

IT WAS the next day on the train on their way to Millerstown, to visit Hiram's church and his family, that an illuminating little incident occurred in the matter of the gifts they were taking to the children.

"What's that package you have, Margaret?" Jennie inquired, rather in the tone of a demand, as the four of them sat in two facing seats of a day coach, Jennie and Sadie having both offered Daniel the seat by the window and regarding Margaret with evident disapproval because she had not offered hers.

"A book for the children," Margaret replied, thinking Jennie's question and tone both somewhat surprisingly impertinent. "An illustrated book of Bible stories. I found very little to choose from in the New Munich shops; this was the best thing I could find. I'm sure your brother Hiram will approve of such a proper book, though it's at the same time one that even naughty little boys will love—just full of gruesome pictures. That's why I got it."

"But Hiram's boys ain't naughty; they're awful well-behaved," Sadie corrected this unjust aspersion.

"I hope not too well-behaved, or I shan't feel at home with them. I like 'the dear, delightful bad ones,' as Riley calls them."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"You had no need to buy them a present, Margaret," Jennie reproved her. "Danny gave me a dollar yesterday for you and him, and then I and Sadie each put fifty cents at—and I got nice presents for the children from us all together."

"What did you pay for the book, Margaret?" asked Daniel. "It looks large."

"I forget exactly; three dollars, I believe, or two-fifty."

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed Daniel hastily. "You're too extravagant!"

"My goodness! Two-fifty or three dollars yet!" cried Jennie. "Money must be a-plenty with you, Margaret."

"I'll tell you what," suggested Daniel fussily: "keep back the presents you brought along, Jennie, and give the book from us all, and then the *next* time we come to Hiram's we can use those other presents."

"Yes, well, but," objected Jennie, "then I and Sadie won't have paid our full share if Margaret gave two-fifty or three dollars for the book yet."

"Which was it, Margaret?" Daniel inquired a bit sharply. "Surely you know whether you paid two-fifty or three dollars for the book?"

"Does it matter? If you require the exact statistics I remember the price of the book was three-fifty, and they offered it to me for three."

"Then, Jennie," said Daniel, "you and Sadie each give a quarter more and we'll save back the other things until the next time."

And to Margaret's unspeakable astonishment her husband's sisters opened their purses, counted out twenty-

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

five cents each and passed it over to Daniel, who serenely received it and dropped it into his own purse.

"If you're playing a game," said Margaret, holding out her hand, "I'll take my share, please—two and a quarter."

"But you and I are one," said Daniel jocularly, "and what's mine is——"

"Your own?" asked Margaret as he hesitated.

Daniel laughed with appreciation of this witty retort. It was discouraging to Margaret that he always laughed when she was fatuous and never when she said a thing she considered rather good.

"And, my dear," he admonished her, "remember after this that we always put together to buy for Hiram's children. We can do better that way, not only for the children, but it comes lighter on each one of us."

Margaret did not reply. The incident, somehow, struck a chill to her heart.

"It must be," she concluded, "that Jennie and Sadie have some little income of their own and are not entirely dependent upon Daniel."

If this were true, she felt it would exonerate her from some of the forbearance she had been so carefully practising.

As they reached Millerstown just in time for the opening of the service at Hiram's church, Margaret first saw her brother-in-law from the front pew, as he stood before his congregation in his pulpit.

"You take notice," Jennie had warned her on their way from the station to the church, "how the folks in Hiram's church *look* when we come in and walk up to the front pew."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"At me?"

"Well, at you, mebbly, *this* Sunday, because this is the first time they are seeing you. But it's Danny they look at mostly, such a way-up lawyer as he is, coming into their church. And every year he gives them a contribution yet."

There actually was a stir in the congregation as the party of four was ushered to the pew reserved for them, and Margaret noted curiously the look of satisfaction it brought to the faces of her husband and his sisters.

The village volunteer choir was singing a "selection" as they entered:

"We're going home to glory  
In the good old-fashioned way."

In Hiram's prayer, which followed, he informed God, whom he addressed in epistolary style as "Dear God," that "the good old-fashioned way" was plenty good enough for the members of the Millerstown United Brethren Church.

Margaret, unable to keep her mind on the rambling discourse intended to be a prayer, noted that the speaker's accent and diction, while not illiterate, were very crude, that he took a manifest pleasure in the hackneyed religious phrases which rolled stentoriously from his lips, and that he wore an expression, as he prayed, of smug self-satisfaction. She also observed that, like Daniel, he was small, slight, and insignificant looking; and she suddenly realized, with a sinking of her heart, that in this uncouth village preacher she really saw her husband as



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

he would assuredly appear if stripped of the veneer which an earlier training and a college education had given him.

As they sat down after the prayer, Sadie whispered to her: "That's Hiram's Lizzie over there with three of the children." And glancing across the aisle, Margaret saw in the opposite front pew a buxom, matronly young woman, dressed somewhat elaborately in clothes of village cut and with a rather heavy but honest and wholesome countenance; her three children, shining from soap and water, and dressed also elaborately in village style, were gathered with her in the pew.

In the sermon that Hiram preached Margaret couldn't help suspecting that he was, this morning, doing some "special stunts" to impress her, so often did his complacent glance wander down to meet her upward, attentive gaze. For indeed she couldn't help listening to him, so astonishing did his so-called sermon seem to her, so colossal his self-approval.

His theme was Lot's unfortunate career in Sodom, and in his extraordinary paraphrasing of the scriptural story he gave it as his opinion that probably one of the causes leading to Lot's downfall was the ambition of Mrs. Lot and her daughter to get into Sodom's Four Hundred. From the Lot family as social climbers in Sodom, the preacher launched forth into a denunciation of the idle, dissipated lives of fashionable women (with which he assumed a first-hand intimacy), a denunciation that seemed rather irrelevant as spiritual food for his simple village hearers. He hauled into his discourse, without regard to sequence of ideas, time, space, or logic, Martha and Mary

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

of the New Testament, saying that some one had once asked him which of the two he'd have preferred to marry. "Martha before dinner and Mary after dinner," had been his response, and his congregation rippled with amusement and almost applauded. A few moments later he was moving them to tears by his deep-toned, solemn references to death and the grave and "the hollow sounds of clods of earth falling upon the coffin lid."

Before pronouncing the Benediction he asked the congregation to "tarry a moment for social intercourse"; and in the exchange of greetings which followed, Margaret could see how Daniel, Jennie, and Sadie revelled in the obsequiousness of most of these shy villagers before their pastor's distinguished brother and his two elaborately arrayed sisters; for Jennie and Sadie looked very expensive indeed in their near-seal coats which they were sure none but an expert could distinguish from sealskin.

When they presently went over to the parsonage, Jennie informed Margaret that Lizzie's father had "furnished for her." The parlour which they entered was fitted out in heavy old-gold plush sofa and chairs, a marble-topped centre table, a gilt-framed motto over the mantel, "Welcome," and a rug in front of the sofa stamped with the words, "Sweet Home."

At the abundant and well-cooked dinner to which they all gathered immediately after church and which was served without any superfluous ceremony, since "Hiram's Lizzie" kept but one "hired girl," Hiram entirely monopolized the table talk, even Daniel being no match in egotism for his clerical brother, and Jennie managing with difficulty

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

to wedge in an occasional warning to Sadie to refrain from eating certain things that might give her "the indigestion."

As for the children, they sat in awed silence under the double spell of their father's flow of speech and the presence of a stranger, their new aunt. They were all three rather dull, heavy children, from whom Margaret's friendly and playful overtures could extract very little response.

Hiram boasted about himself so shamelessly that Margaret wondered why his wife, sensible woman as she appeared to be, did not blush for him. But Lizzie's Pennsylvania German sense of deep loyalty to her spouse, her reverence for him as a minister, no less than her natural simplicity and stupidity, blinded her to his painfully obvious weaknesses and made her see in him only those things in which he was her superior. He, on his part, patronized her kindly. She could not have suited him better if she had been made to order.

"Yes, I'm often told by folks who hear me preach or lecture that I'm a born orator. That's what they say I am—a born orator. No credit to me—comes natural. You noticed, sister-in-law, my sermon this morning was entirely extemporaneous. Only a few notes to guide me. Nothing at all but a few notes. And did I pause for a word, sister-in-law, did I?"

"I didn't *hear* you pause, brother-in-law," responded Margaret, adding to herself, "You big wind-bag! If you ever did pause for a word, your words might occasionally mean something."

"You might think I spent a great deal of time in the

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

preparation of my sermons," continued Hiram. "Any one *would* think so that heard me. But I can prove it by Lizzie that I don't have to. Give me a text and get me started and it's like rolling down hill for me. Natural gift. Couldn't help it if I wanted to. Have my people laughing one minute, crying the next—story of Mary and Martha—clods of earth falling on coffin lid—humour and pathos alternately. That's oratory, sister-in-law. Why, they think here in Millerstown that they can't have any kind of a celebration without me to speak—Fourth of July, Memorial Day, Lincoln's and Washington's Birthday celebrations, Y. M. C. A. meetings, Y. W. C. A. rallies, W. C. T. U. gatherings, S. P. C. A. anniversaries. I'm constantly in demand, constantly. Nothing quite right unless Reverend Leitzel's there to speak! Ain't it so, Lizzie?"

"Yes, indeed, it's something wonderful the way they're after him all the time to speak," said Lizzie with pride.

"When I take my month's vacation in the summer and they have to listen to a substitute for four Sundays, oh, my, but then you hear them growl! 'The substitute may be a good enough preacher' they say to me, 'but he won't be our Reverend Leitzel.' And when I come back to them again—well, the way they flock to hear me the very first Sunday, and the way they tell me, 'That substitute never made us laugh once; he never made us shed a tear. There's no sermons like yours, Reverend Leitzel!' Ain't they always glad to see me back again, Lizzie, after my vacation?"

"Well, I guess!" replied Lizzie, holding a large slice



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

of bread on her palm and spreading it with butter for Zwingli.

"I'm even invited to New Munich sometimes to give an address and to Lebanon and even to Reading yet, and that's a big place. You see they know I have the power to hold an audience. I never *fail* to hold my audience. Did you ever see me fail to hold my audiences, Lizzie?"

"No, indeed, they're always sorry when he stops preaching!" affirmed Lizzie.

"I was once approached by some men who offered to finance me as an evangelist, and if I had consented I'd be as rich a man to-day as brother Daniel is, for there ain't a more money-making profession to-day than Evangelism, every one knows that. Look at Billy Sunday's rake-offs! But I had to refuse them because they wanted me to do a certain thing that my conscience wouldn't leave me do: they said a feature of my evangelistic campaign would have to be addresses to audiences of Women Only, on Eugenics; that you couldn't have a swell, up-to-date evangelistic campaign without that big drawing card. Well, I said I could easy do that; so that part was all right. *But* when they told me that in order to make it a go, I'd have to interduce into my talk to Women Only, one or two *suggestive remarks*, I refused!" said Hiram heroically. "Not one suggestive remark will I make, I told them. 'Take me or leave me, but I won't make *one suggestive remark* to an audience of Women Only!' So," he concluded grandly, "by standing up for my principles, you see, I lost a fortune!"

Margaret glanced, now and then, at Daniel and his

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

sisters to learn from their faces whether they considered Hiram sane; but they, far from looking alarmed or disgusted, seemed to regard the bouquets he flung at himself as a personal tribute to themselves, his near relatives, who could at least inhale their fragrance.

"Yes, Hiram's a born preacher, that I will say," remarked Jennie.

"Yes, from a little boy, yet, he always wanted to be a preacher," added Sadie.

"He's got the gift all right," affirmed Daniel emphatically.

An expectant pause, just here, made Margaret realize that they were waiting for her to cast *her* bouquet at Hiram's feet. She was an amiable creature and would have been perfectly willing to oblige them if her wits had been more agile; but for the life of her she could think of nothing to say that would not too deeply perjure her soul.

Her silence, however, in no way daunted Hiram.

"How did *you* like my sermon this morning, sister-in-law?" he frankly inquired.

"It was the best—of its kind—I ever heard," responded Margaret, looking at him without blinking.

"Thank you," he bowed. "I'm sure you are perfectly sincere, too, in your complimentary opinion."

"Perfectly sincere," said Margaret.

"In what church were *you* raised?"

"My family has a perpetual life ownership of a pew in the oldest Episcopal Church in Charleston, but I must admit that it isn't often occupied."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"You are a Christian, I trust?" said Hiram gravely.

Margaret did not think a reply necessary, or perhaps advisable. So she made none.

"Are you a Christian, sister-in-law?" Hiram solemnly repeated.

"I'm a Democrat, a Suffragist, a Southerner—I don't know what all!" said Margaret flippantly.

"Do you mean to tell me, sister-in-law, that you ain't a Christian?"

"I consider that a very personal question, and if you call me 'sister-in-law' again, I'll—I'll steal your little girl here," she added, slipping her arm about the unresponsive child at her side, "and take her home with me. Do you want to come to New Munich with your new aunt, my dear?" she asked the child.

"Yes, ma'am."

This digression diverted the talk for a time from the all-engrossing topic of Hiram's oratorical prowess, and as there now ensued the distracting clatter of clearing the laden table for dessert, the respite continued a bit longer.

But after dinner, when they were again gathered in the parlour, Hiram continued his monologue with unabated relish, pacing the length of the room as he talked, his well-disciplined, or utterly phlegmatic, children sitting in silence among their elders, Daniel fondly holding on his knee Christian, the youngest of the three (there was a rather new baby upstairs), and letting him play with his big gold watch.

Having got the impression that Margaret was an "unbeliever," Hiram entered upon a polemic in defence of

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"the faith once delivered to the saints," sweeping from the earth with one fell stroke all the results of German scholarship in Biblical criticism, refuting in three sentences the arguments (as he understood them) of Darwin, Spencer, and Huxley, putting Matthew Arnold severely in his place as "a back number," rating Emerson as "a gross materialist," and himself as a godly and spiritually minded favourite of Almighty God.

Margaret soon began to feel very restive under this continued deluge. She would have liked a chance to cultivate the children, or to talk to Lizzie and try to discover whether that good, sensible face had anything behind it besides an evidently doting belief in her husband.

"Probably not," she mused, while Hiram continued to blow his trumpet. "A merciful Providence, foreseeing her marriage to this unspeakable ass, made her brainless. Oh! What would Uncle Osmond have done with a creature like this Hiram? What would happen, I wonder, if I said 'damn' before him? If it weren't for the feelings of Daniel and his sisters, I'd certainly try it on him. If I find myself alone with him, I'm *going* to swear! I'll swear *at* him! I'll say, 'You little damn fool!'"



### XIII

IT WAS not until the hour for leaving Millerstown, when Margaret was taken by her hostess to an upstairs' bedroom to rearrange her hair before starting, that she and Hiram's wife were given an opportunity for a word together. What, then, was her chagrin to have Lizzie at once take up her husband's eulogistic harangue where he had left it off.

"Daniel and Jennie and Sadie always say their New Munich preacher seems so slow and uninteresting after they've heard Hiram. I guess you'll think, too, next Sunday, their minister's a poor preacher towards what Hiram is."

"I don't go to church *every* Sunday. To tell you the truth, Lizzie, I'm not awfully fond of sermons."

"Oh, ain't you? I do like a good sermon, the kind Hiram preaches."

"You never get tired of them?"

"Not of Hiram's," said Lizzie, shocked.

"Of course not of Hiram's," Margaret hastily concurred.

"Does Danny insist you go along to the U. B. Church, or do you attend the Episcopal?"

"The Episcopalians are trying to gather me into their fold and Daniel seems to want me to go there."

"It's so much more tony than at the U. B. Church,"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

nodded Lizzie understandingly. "Yes, Danny often said already that if he hadn't a brother that is a U. B. preacher, he'd join to the Episcopals. But it wouldn't look nice for him to leave the U. B.'s when Hiram's minister of the U. B. Church, would it?"

"It wouldn't look nice for him to leave it for the other reason you mentioned."

"That the Episcopals are so tony that way? Well, but Danny thinks an awful lot of that—if a thing is tony or not. Don't *you*, too? You look as if you did."

"The word isn't in my vocabulary, Lizzie. Let me have another look at the baby before I go, won't you?"

"He looks like Hiram—ain't?" said the mother fondly as they stood beside the crib in her bedroom and gazed down upon the sleeping infant. "I hope he gives as smart a man as what his father is."

"But, Lizzie, don't you think the room is too close for him?" Margaret gasped, loosening the fur at her throat in the stifling atmosphere of the chamber.

"Yes," Lizzie whispered, "but Jennie and Sadie are so *old-fashioned* that way, they think it's awful to have fresh air at a baby. When they go, I open up."

"But," asked Margaret, surprised, "why do you have to be 'old-fashioned' because they are?"

"Hush—sh! They're coming upstairs to get their coats and hats. A person darsent go against them, especially Jennie. Haven't you found *that* out yet? I've been *wondering* how you were getting on with them; they'll want to boss you so!"

"Oh, I was bossed for nine years by the uncle with whom

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

I lived, so I've learned how to—I'm used to it," she judiciously returned.

"Do you think you can stick it out with them?" Lizzie whispered. "Don't you think mebbly one of these days they'll go *too* far and you'll answer them back? And I guess they often bragged to you already, didn't they—how they never get over an *insult*?"

"I trust I shall never insult them!"

"Well, I'm as peaceable as most," said Lizzie, "but I often felt glad already that we live a little piece away from Jennie and Sadie, though I know I oughtn't to say it."

"But I still don't see, Lizzie, why you keep this room air-tight because they don't like fresh air," said Margaret, puzzled. "Do you mean you'd rather damage your baby than have them quarrel with you?"

"Well, I open up as soon as they go. You see if they ever get mad at me, they'd cut our children out of their will."

"Their will? I thought Daniel supported them."

Lizzie stared incredulously. "Danny supported them?" she repeated hoarsely. "Och, my souls! You thought that! As if he would!"

Lizzie looked so contemptuous of Margaret's intelligence that the latter realized their opinion of each other's brilliancy was mutual.

"But," Margaret argued, "Daniel would have to support them if they were penniless. They are too old to support themselves."

"They have their own good incomes this long time already," stated Lizzie. "Do you mean to say," she asked

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

wonderingly, "that you thought they *hadn't* anything and yet you didn't mind Daniel's keeping them at his house with *you* there?"

"Why should that make any difference to me—their 'having' anything?"

"Say!" said Lizzie, her dull eyes wide open. "I always heard how in the South it gives easy-going people, but I never thought they would be *that* easy-going!"

"Suppose *your* husband wanted his sisters to live here," Margaret asked curiously, "you would not consent to it? You'd oppose Hiram, would you? I can't seem to see you doing that, Lizzie."

"But Hiram wouldn't want Jennie and Sadie to live here! He'd know better. He'd know that, peaceable as I am, I couldn't hold out with them; and to be sure, Hiram and I would both feel awful bad to have them get down on us. Why, they've got, anyhow, a hundred thousand dollars apiece!"

"And wear near-seal coats," said Margaret thoughtfully, "and rhinestone rings! How queer!"

"Yes, ain't their coats grand? They paid fifty dollars apiece for them! Maybe Danny will get *you* one like them some time."

"God forbid! I'd get a divorce if he did! Come, Lizzie, don't you be a coward—let some air into this room. I'll stand by you and take your part!" she said, holding up her muff as if it were a revolver and aiming toward the next room, in which they could hear the voices of Jennie and Sadie. "Advance at your peril!" she dramatically addressed the closed door between the two rooms.



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Lizzie stared in dumb wonder and slowly shook her head. "No, I darsent get Jennie mad at me. Wait till *you* have a baby once and you will see how they'll want to tell you the way to raise it. You'll have to mind them if you want your children to inherit from them."

"Oh, Lizzie, it doesn't pay to sell one's soul for a mess of pottage!"

Scarcely had she spoken when she looked for Lizzie to respond, "You married Danny!" But this bright retort did not apparently occur to Lizzie, for she only stared at Margaret dumbly.

"Well," thought Margaret, "of course a woman who considered Hiram a prize wouldn't think Daniel needed to be apologized for."

"Lizzie," she changed the subject abruptly, "have you ever seen your husband's step-mother?"

"Once or twice or so, yes."

"I've been in New Munich two months and have not yet met her, though, you know, she lives only fifteen miles away."

"Yes, well, but we don't associate with her much. She's very plain and common that way, and Jennie and Sadie are so proud and high-minded, you know. They're ashamed of their step-mother."

"And you, Lizzie, are you ashamed of her?"

"Oh, well, me, I'm not so proud that way. But Hiram he would not like for me to take up with her, he feels it so much that they have to leave her live rent free in their old home when she ain't their own mother; but Daniel and the girls won't put her to the poorhouse for fear it

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

would make talk, and that wouldn't do, you see, Daniel being such a consistent church member and Hiram a minister. She used to come here to see us once in a while and Hiram used to be ashamed to walk with her to the depot when she would go away, because she is a Mennonite and dresses in the plain garb, and it *looks* so for a United Brethren minister to walk through the town with a Mennonite. People would have asked him, next time they saw him, who she was. So he used to make Naomi walk with her to the depot. Naomi didn't like it either, she was afraid her girl friends might laugh at her grandmother. But her father always made her go. And then after a while grandmom she stopped coming in to see us any more. You see," Lizzie lowered her voice, "the Leitzels don't want folks to know about their step-mother."

"Because she is 'plain and common?'"

"Yes, and because it could make trouble. I don't rightly understand, but I think they're afraid some one might put her up to bringing a law-suit about the property. But I tell Hiram he needn't be afraid of that; no one could make her do anything against any of them, she's too proud of them and she's such a good-hearted old soul, she wouldn't hurt a cat."

Margaret was silently thoughtful as she drew on her gloves.

"About six months back," Lizzie continued, "she surprised us all by coming in again to see us; it was so long since she'd been to see us, we never looked for her. And to be sure, we never encouraged her to come, either, Hiram feeling the way he does. Well, she come in to tell us she

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

didn't feel able to do for herself any more out there alone on the old place—she supported herself raising vegetables in the backyard—and now, she said, she's too old any more to do it, and wouldn't we give her a home, or either Hiram, or either Danny and the girls. Well, the girls and Danny wouldn't hear to it. Me, I said if she was strong enough to help me with the work a little, I could send off my hired girl and take her. But Hiram said she wouldn't be able to do the washing like our hired girl did, and we couldn't keep her *and* the hired girl; and anyhow he couldn't have her living with us, her being a Mennonite. 'It stands to reason!' Hiram said. So she went back home again and I haven't seen her since. I pity her, too, livin' alone out there, as old as what she is. I can't think *how* she makes out, either! What makes it seem so hard is that she was such a good, kind step-mother to them all while they were poor, and it was only her hard work that kept a roof over them for many years while their father drank and didn't do anything for them."

Margaret still made no comment, though she was looking very grave and thoughtful.

"Would it mebbly make you ashamed, too," asked Lizzie, "before your grand friends in New Munich, to have her 'round, she talks so Dutch and ignorant?"

"No," Margaret shook her head, "I'm not 'proud and high-minded' like Jennie and Sadie."

"Well," admitted Lizzie confidentially, "I'm not, either; I told Hiram once, 'You have no need to feel ashamed of her. Wasn't Christ's father nothing but a carpenter?' But Hiram answered me, 'Och, Lizzie, you're dumb!

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Joseph was no blood relation to Christ.' 'Well,' I said, 'neither is your step-mother your blood relation.'"

"I suppose," Margaret speculated, "if their step-mother had money to leave them, they wouldn't feel so 'high-minded' about her, would they?"

"Oh, no," Lizzie readily assented; "that would make all the difference! But, you see, she hasn't a thing but what she gets from the vegetables she can raise."

"I do begin to see," nodded Margaret.

"Danny never told us," Lizzie ventured tentatively, curiosity evidently getting the better of delicacy, "what *you're* worth!"

"What I'm 'worth?' He hasn't tried me long enough to find out. But I hope I'll be worth as much to him as you are to Hiram—giving him children and making a home for him."

"But I mean," explained Lizzie, colouring a little at her own temerity, but with curiosity oozing from every pore of her, "what did you *bring* Danny? I guess Jennie and Sadie told you already that I brought Hiram thirty thousand. And I'll get more when my father is deceased."

"Are both your parents living?" asked Margaret with what seemed to Lizzie persistent evasion.

"My mother died last summer," she returned in a matter-of-fact, almost cheerful tone of voice. "Pop had her to Phil-delph-y and she got sick for him, and he had to bring her right home, and in only half a day's time, she was a corpse already!" said Lizzie brightly.

"As though she expected me to say, 'Hurrah! Good for Mother!'" thought Margaret wonderingly.



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"*Did* you inherit, too, from your parents?" persisted her inquisitor.

"All my virtues and all my vices, I believe," answered Margaret, turning away and walking to the door. "Shall we go down now?"

Lizzie took a step after her: "Maybe you think I spoke too soon?" she asked anxiously.

"Spoke too soon?"

"Asking you what you're worth. To be sure it ain't any of my business. But I thought I'd ask you once. Hiram would be so pleased if after you go I could tell him. He wonders so, did his brother Danny do as well as he did. But I guess I spoke too soon."

She paused expectantly.

"Never mind," said Margaret dully, again turning away.

"Say!" said Lizzie solicitously, "you look tired and a little pale. Would you feel for a cup of tea before you go?"

"No thank you, Lizzie."

Just here the door opened softly and Jennie and Sadie came into the room and went to the crib of the slumbering baby.

"Yes, he looks good," nodded Jennie approvingly. "You have got the room nice and warm, Lizzie. Just you keep the air off of him and he'll never get sick for you. There's a doctor's wife lives near us and you ought to see, Lizzie, the outlandish way she raises that baby! Why, any time you pass the house you can see the baby-coach out on the front porch standing, whether it's cold

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

or warm! A doctor's wife, mind you, exposing her young baby like that! Till they're anyhow eight months old already, they shouldn't be taken into the air, winter or summer. If you didn't keep little Danny in the house all the time, you'd soon see how he'd ketch cold for you!"

Lizzie looked at Margaret solemnly, with an expression that might have been interpreted as a wink.

"He certainly is a fine boy!" murmured Sadie fondly, looking upon the little pink and white baby with a vague yearning in her old face.

"Yes," said Jennie pensively, "babies are such nice little things. I often think it's such a pity there ain't a more genteel way of getting them."

Lizzie nudged Margaret behind Jennie's back.

"It's a pity they have to grow up to be men," said Margaret.

As they all went downstairs, Lizzie held Margaret back for an instant to whisper to her: "I don't know what loosened up my tongue to-day, to say the things to you I did! Hiram would be cross if he knew how free I told you things."

"About his step-mother, you mean?"

"No, I mean about Jennie and Sadie. You might go and *tell* them what I said!"

"Yes, I might, if I were the villainess of a play and wanted to make them cut your children out of their wills!"

"You *won't* tell, will you?" Lizzie pleaded. "It ain't that *I'd* care so much (though to be sure, I'd like to think the children would inherit all they could), but it's Hiram

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

would be so displeased at me talking to you the way I did."

"Don't give yourself any anxiety, Lizzie; of course I shall not 'tell.'"

Margaret reflected, on the way home, as, quiet and rather white, she leaned back in her seat in the train, pleading fatigue and a headache to escape conversation, that this day, somehow, marked an epoch in her understanding of the Leitzel family. She had suddenly, after two months of incredible obtuseness, recognized that they measured everything in life—duty, friendship, religion, love—by just one thing.

"Yet Daniel married a dowerless wife!" she marvelled.

The wild suspicion crossed her mind that Walter might have misled Daniel into thinking her an heiress, even as he had let her assume that her lover was well-born.

But she was instantly ashamed of herself for even conceiving of such treachery on Walter's part.

## XIV

SADIE LEITZEL looked as though she were about to collapse with the pressure of all that she had to communicate to Jennie when next morning she returned alone, at noon, from a shopping excursion upon which she had started out just after breakfast with Margaret.

Dropping her bundles upon the centre table in the sitting-room, where Jennie sat in the bay window darning Daniel's socks, she dropped herself upon the sofa with a long breath of mingled excitement and exhaustion.

"Well, did she get her dress? And where is she at?" Jennie inquired.

"No, she didn't get her dress!" breathed Sadie, taking off, one by one, her veil, gloves, hat, furs, overshoes, and coat. "I guess she didn't have an *intention* of getting a dress when she started out with me! I had the hardest time to get her to even look at their things at Fahnestock's. She seems to think, Jennie, that New Munich hasn't anything good enough for her to wear!"

"Did she say that?" demanded Jennie.

"Well, when she had only just gave a careless glance at some of their *ready-made* evening dresses, she shook her head and said to me, 'There's nothing here; I'll have to wait until I go to Philadelphia some time.' And when I



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

wanted her, then, to get goods and take it to Miss Snyder, she said Fahnestock's had such a cheap, poor quality of goods, not worth making up!"

"Well," pronounced Jennie, "I guess if our New Munich stores are good enough for you and me, they're plenty good enough for as plain a dresser as what she is! Our clothes are a lot dressier than hers! The idea!"

"Yes, the very idea!"

"And after Danny's telling her he *wanted* her to have a new dress! And me telling her that her dresses that she's got give us all a shamed face!"

"All she got new for herself," said Sadie, "was another pair of those long white kid gloves at four-fifty a pair. I told her silk ones would do just as good, and then you can wash. But she didn't listen to me; she just took my hand and held it out to the saleslady and told her to measure it and," added Sadie, a veiled pleasure coming into her eyes, "she got *me* a pair of long white kid gloves, too, and paid for them out of that twenty-dollar check Danny gave her!"

"Oh!" cried Jennie, shocked, "when Danny gave it to her for a dress yet! What'll he say anyhow?"

"She knows he's so crazy about her, she don't seem afraid to do anything!" said Sadie.

"He'll soon stop giving her money if she spends it on other ones instead of for what he tells her to buy!"

"Yes, I guess! But me—I never had any long white kid gloves before, Jennie!" Sadie could not repress her beaming pleasure. "They'll feel grand, I guess."

"Four-fifty is too much to put into a pair of gloves; your white silk ones would do plenty good enough."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"But she got you a pair, too, Jennie! Here they are," added Sadie, fumbling among her packages on the table. "She asked me your size and got you a pair, too."

"I won't wear them! I'll get the money back and give it to Danny!" declared Jennie, who, according to her lights, was as scrupulous as she was "close." "It ain't right to Danny for her to squander his money like that. My gracious! Thirteen-fifty for just gloves! You ought to take yours back, too, Sadie!"

"But the saleslady tried one of mine on and stretched them," returned Sadie, not very regretfully. "And mind, Jennie," she hastily diverted her sister from her suggestion, "mind what she did with the rest part of the twenty dollars!"

"What?" demanded Jennie.

"She spent every cent of it buying presents for her sister's children in Charleston! When I told her Danny wouldn't like it at all for her to do that, she said, 'Oh, but Daniel loves my little nephew and nieces; he will be glad to have me send them something from us both'; and she put in the package a card, 'From Daniel and Margaret for the three dearest babies in the world.'"

"My souls!" Jennie exclaimed. "What'll Danny *say* yet—her using up all that twenty dollars and nothing to show for it!"

"Except three pairs of white kid gloves." Sadie shook her head pensively, but still with a covert gleam of pleasure in her own share of the "rake-off."

"Well," said Jennie with emphasis, "I'll certainly give her a piece of my mind! Where is she at?"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"She said as it was twelve o'clock, she'd go to Danny's office and walk home with him for dinner; and what do you think she gave me as her reason for doing that?"

"Well, what?"

"She said she wanted a chance to see that Hamilton girl again that works for our Danny! Did you ever?—when we all *told* her already she can't associate with Danny's clerk!"

"Well, Sadie," said Jennie grimly, "Margaret's easy-going and she thinks we're the same. She'll have to learn her mistake, that's all. She ain't going to run with that Hamilton girl, and that's all there is to it! Enough said!"

"Och, Jennie, if you'd been along this morning you'd have wondered *at* her the way she acts, speaking so awful friendly and pleasant to the girls that waited on us in the store and even saying, 'Thank you, my dear,' to a little cash-girl! Yes, making herself that familiar! And then when Mrs. Congressman Ocksreider come along through the store and I poked Margaret that she should stop and speak to her, Margaret just nodded and walked right a-past her, though you could see that Mrs. Ocksreider was going to stop and talk to us! And, Jennie, I wanted the store-girls to see us conversing with Mrs. Ocksreider. I would have stopped and talked with her myself, *whether* or no, but she looked mad and sailed right a-past me the way Margaret had sailed a-past *her*, and I heard two girls at the button counter tittering and saying, 'Did you ever get left?' I was so cross at Margaret, I told her, 'You hardly spoke to her and she's Mrs. Congressman Ocksreider and worth a half a million dollars!' and Margaret

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

answered me, 'I didn't think she was worth two cents any time I've talked with her. But if she's a member of Congress! Why, Sadie, you are deceiving me, Pennsylvania is not yet a Suffrage state!' she said, and I told her I didn't say it was and certainly hoped it never would be. 'But,' I said, 'that's neither here nor there, whether Pennsylvania's a Suffrage state! What *I* wish is that if you have to cut any one, let it be cash-girls and not our most high-toned lady-friends,' I said."

"And what," asked Jennie, "did she answer to *that*?"

"She said, 'Oh, Sadie, I feel quite too humble to want to 'cut' *any* one, even pretentious people like your Congressman's ordinary little wife!' 'Well,' I said. '*You're* got no need to feel humble, now that you're married to our *Danny*!' But, Jennie," said Sadie, looking bewildered, "think of calling Mrs. Ocksreider 'ordinary little wife!'"

"Well, I think! It was enough to give you the headache, Sadie, such a morning as you've had!"

"But *do* you think, mebbby," Sadie asked, a little awe-struck, "that Governors are higher than Congressmen—Margaret thinking herself better than Mrs. Ocksreider yet!"

"It would look that way," said Jennie, also impressed.

"Here she and Danny come!" Jennie announced at the sound of the opening of the front door. "They're *laughing*; so I guess he don't know yet about that twenty dollars!"

"And I guess she listened to me after all," added Sadie, "about going in there to his office and acting familiar with Miss Hamilton, or else Danny wouldn't be *laughing* with her!"



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Had they known what had really taken place in Daniel's office while they had been sitting here discussing Margaret (who, to tell the truth, was far more of an enigma to them than they were to her), they would have considered Daniel's laughter, just now, as he entered the house with her, to be nothing short of lunacy.

A half-hour earlier Daniel, on returning to his private office from a tour of inspection through his other offices, had heard, to his surprise, from the adjoining room where his secretary was supposed to be working, her voice in earnest conversation with some one. The door between his room and hers was ajar and he could distinctly hear what she was saying, the character of which was so far removed from any phase of the legal business of his office that Daniel was dumbfounded. It was sacrilege to introduce here anything that did not pertain strictly to the work of the firm.

"The religious introspection," Miss Hamilton was saying, "so widely engendered by Emerson's writings in men and women of a high type, has come to seem to us, in these days, rather morbid; we consider it as unwholesome, now, to think too much about our spiritual, as about our physical, health. Then, too, the struggle for existence being sharper, people have less time to sit down and investigate their souls; they've got to keep going, or be left behind in the race."

"In their effort to win in the race, however—what they call winning—they're very likely to lose their own souls; and 'What profiteth it a man?'" spoke another voice in reply, a voice that brought a quick flush to Daniel's

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

face; a flush of strangely mingled emotions: of anger that she was here with his secretary, and of the joy with which the sound of her voice, the mere ripple of her skirts, never failed to thrill him.

"The art of Mrs. Humphry Ward," Miss Hamilton was again speaking (he had missed a connecting link through the shock of discovering Margaret's presence), "has been a steady, upward growth and development: every novel produced by her is more artistic than its predecessor. But though her art is now at its climax, she is no longer read as she used to be, because her point of view is one that the world has passed by; the women of her books are the ideal feminine creations of fifty years ago and they don't interest us any longer. Now most of us have not yet grown up to Bernard Shaw's point of view, yet we are nearer to him than to Mrs. Ward. To my mind the whole feminist problem is an economic one. No man or woman can be spiritually free who is economically dependent, Emerson and Marcus Aurelius and the Christian Scientists to the contrary notwithstanding. Even the vote isn't going to help women until they make up their minds to 'get off of men's backs,' as Charlotte Perkins Gilman says."

"How about married women who are bearing children?" asked Margaret. "They've got to be financially dependent on some one."

"Since the state does not support women who are giving citizens to it and who are thereby disabled from self-support, they should have a legal right over a fair proportion of their husband's income."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"But in America men don't need to be coerced by laws to treat women generously," suggested Margaret.

"That's your Southern idea. A self-respecting human being does not want generosity; she does not want to stretch out her hand and ask for what she needs. It is humiliating, degrading. Fancy a grown woman asking a man, '*May I buy a hat to-day?*' I'd rather take in stairs to scrub!"

"Well," Margaret returned, "I shall educate *all* my daughters to professions, because, quite apart from the economic side of it, women become such drivelling fools when they live in aimless idleness, when they have no definite interest in life. And they are so discontented and restless. An occupation, an interest, surely makes for happiness and for a higher personal development."

"I believe," said Miss Hamilton, "that a mother wrongs a daughter, just as much as she would wrong a son, when she fails to educate her for a self-supporting occupation. Look at these women of New Munich who live only to kill time—how they lack the personal dignity, the character, that a life of service, of *producing*, gives to either man or woman! Of course mere work doesn't ennoble—beasts of burden can work—it's work that vitally interests us, as you say, and that we love for its own sake, that is the joy and health of any soul."

"Do you love being Mr. Leitzel's secretary like that?"

"Of course not. Being Mr. Leitzel's secretary is two thirds drudgery and only one third humanly interesting. I'm threatening to take to the platform to expound the Truth that women who have to support themselves are

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

invariably overworked, while women who live on men haven't enough to do to keep them wholesome. Middle-aged married women, for instance, whose children are grown up, go almost insane for want of an interest in life. No wonder human creatures so situated grow fretful and petty and small-souled."

"Perhaps the window-smashing Suffragette is only reacting from too long want of occupation," suggested Margaret. "The emptiness of her life makes her hysterical and she shrieks with rage and throws things! But, my dear, why do you, clever as you are, remain in a position that is two thirds drudgery? Drudgery is for dull people, who of course prefer it to work that would tax them to think."

"It is a stepping-stone for me to the bigger work I shall some day do, Mrs. Leitzel."

"What is that?"

"Something splendid!" Miss Hamilton responded in a voice of quite girlish delight. "Something in which you shall have a share, if you will, a very big share! I'll tell you all about it one of these days. We haven't time now. It's lunch time and I have only a half-hour."

"When can we get together again?" Margaret eagerly asked. "I am just living for these times with you!"

"And you must know," responded Miss Hamilton with feeling, "what they mean to me, starved as I've been for companionship in a place like New Munich! Well, I'm free every evening. And we could take walks any afternoon between five and seven that you were not engaged."

"Then as soon as people have finished giving parties in



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

my honour, I shall be free to be with you as much as you'll let me be, Miss Hamilton. I shan't have to go to parties that are not given specially for me."

"Of course not. You couldn't keep it up. For a woman like you it would be too deadly."

This, to Daniel, was a new and upsetting point of view; he was so sure that all women in Miss Hamilton's position were envious of the social rioting of women placed as his wife was. And here was Margaret planning to discard "society" for evenings and rambles with his stenographer! As if Miss Hamilton were not uppish enough already from her constant offers of higher salaries! Why, even as it was, he could hardly put up with her air of independence; and if he permitted his wife to take her up as an intimate friend—well, of course he would have to emphatically put a stop to the thing. He thought he had expressed himself definitely enough to Margaret last Saturday while they were automobiling, but evidently he had not.

"I'll make myself unmistakably clear this time!" he resolved. "I'll let Margaret know that I am not accustomed to having my wishes set aside as of no importance!"

## XV

TEN minutes later he and Margaret sat facing each other from either side of his flat-topped office-desk.

Miss Hamilton's conscience-clear self-possession as she had passed through his office to go to her luncheon, and his wife's equally guiltless aspect as she had greeted him with cheerful affection, had been a little disarming, it is true, to his determined purpose. But Daniel was not readily diverted from a line he had decided upon, and Margaret's easy indifference to his expressed wish as to her associating with Miss Hamilton had aroused his obstinacy. And Daniel's obstinacy was a snag to be reckoned with.

So, seated opposite her at his desk, he had expounded to her very forcibly his reasons for prohibiting any social relations whatever with any one of his office staff.

"And now," he concluded his harangue, "*I lay my command upon you, my dear.*"

"Oh, but, my dear!" laughed Margaret, "that's rather absurd, you know! Now listen, Daniel. If you warned me against Miss Hamilton as a person who was immoral or illiterate or ill-bred, I should of course see the reasonableness of your objection to her. But when she is really superior in every respect to every one of the people you

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

do want me to be intimate with: better born, better bred, more intelligent; when my intimacy with her is going to mean to me more than I have words to express—a close friendship with a congenial and stimulating mind and character—you can't expect me to give it up for such reasons as you offer me, Daniel, chief among them being that she works for her living. But in the South we are so used, since the war, to seeing gentlewomen work for their living, and we are so unused to meeting, socially, people like the Ocksreiders and the Millers, who tell me (one of them did) that her house is 'het by steam' and who say, 'Outen the light'—well, dear, you see," she concluded, rising, "it is ridiculous to discuss it. Let us go home to luncheon."

"Sit down, Margaret."

"But I'm famishing, Daniel. I'm weak with hunger. You'll have to take me home in a taxicab if you don't take me soon."

"Sit down! You've got to promise to obey me in this matter, Margaret."

"Oh!" her voice rippled with laughter, "this is the twentieth century A. D., not B. C., Daniel. You're mixed in your dates! And you seem to forget you married me, you didn't adopt me."

"You must drop at once any further relations with my secretary."

"But, dear," she exclaimed in surprise, "haven't I yet made it clear to you that I don't intend to?"

"I am accustomed to being obeyed, Margaret!"

"By whom? Your wives?"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Come, come, I want your promise."

"Daniel," she plead with him, "please don't be so tiresome! I am sure that you, clever lawyer that you are, must recognize that my position is quite impregnable and yours weak and indefensible, asking me to be friends with people who 'outen the light' and to cut one with whom I can have such improving conversations as that to which you ignominiously listened just now! Why didn't you honourably close your door? Could you *understand* our deep remarks, Daniel?"

"I'm waiting for your promise, Margaret."

Again Margaret rose. "I'm hungry and I'm going home."

"Margaret," said Daniel incredulously, "surely you are not deliberately refusing what I ask of you?"

"As surely as I'd refuse to walk a tight-rope at your behest, my lord."

"You defy me?" he asked quietly, his lips white.

It was her turn, now, to look incredulous. "But, Daniel, how can you take it to heart like this? How can you suppose yourself better qualified than I am to choose my friends? Next thing," she laughed, "you'll be telling me what books I may not read!"

"Do you intend to obey me?"

"I hope I know my wifely duty too well to spoil you, my dear. 'Obey' you indeed!" She tweaked the tip of his nose derisively.

"You will obey me, Margaret, or——" He paused helplessly.

"Obey me!" she mocked him, "or die, woman! Well,



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Daniel, if it comes to force"—she looked at her pink finger nails—"I can scratch!"

She suddenly bent and kissed his forehead. "Do come home!"

"When I've had your promise."

"Daniel, a woman in these days who 'obeys' her husband ought to be ostracized, or arrested and confined in an institution for dangerous lunatics!"

Daniel looked at her meditatively. "I'm certainly up against it!" he was saying to himself. "I could be firm against tears or temper; but when she just jokes about it and laughs at me and goes on doing as she pleases, what can I do with her?"

"Margaret," he said, "I've never quarrelled with any one in my life, but," he added, a little icy gleam in his eyes that did chill her for the moment, "I've *always had my own way!*"

"Which has, of course, been dreadfully bad for you. It's well you've married a wife that is going to be *very firm* with you!"

Daniel bit his lip to keep from laughing. Not for an instant did he think of yielding. The difficulty of the situation served only to aggravate his obstinacy. There was more than one way of getting a thing, and Daniel was not at all above resorting to cunning. Half the successes of his career had been the result of his cunning. He did not call it that; he named it subtlety, far-sightedness.

"I want to ask you something, Margaret; sit down."

She sighed and dropped again into the chair opposite him.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"You bought your new dress—frock—gown, this morning?"

She shook her head, too weary and hungry to speak.

"You didn't?"

"I told you I didn't intend to get anything."

"But we all told you to! I wish you to!"

"Can't get anything in New Munich. Don't suppose you'd want me to go to Philadelphia or Lancaster just now, for a gown, with the expense of the party on your hands?"

"That would be an unnecessary extravagance."

"I shall buy no clothes in this village while I have what I have."

"And that twenty dollars I gave you?"

"What about it?"

"I gave it to you for a gown."

"I know you did. But I told you last Saturday I didn't want one."

"Did you cash the check?"

"Yes."

"Where is the money?"

"Spent."

"What! Spent for *what*?"

"Oh, Daniel, you *busybody*! Well, it was spent for kid gloves and presents for Hattie's babies from you and me. We needed the gloves; I didn't need a gown; you seemed anxious to have me squander twenty dollars, so I sent six dollars' worth of things to the babies in Charleston."

"Without consulting me!"

"But there was nothing to consult about. And you seemed so determined to have me spend twenty dollars."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"For a frock."

Margaret flopped her head wearily on her hand and did not answer.

"You say 'we' needed the gloves. Did you buy *me* some? I don't need any."

"I bought some for Jennie and Sadie," she answered mechanically.

Daniel's face turned red. "What did you spend on *them*?"

"I don't know—twice four-fifty. *You* multiply it."

"Nine dollars for gloves for them! Good heavens! But, Margaret, they have their *own* money."

"That's nice of them—I mean for them. Ah, Daniel, won't you come home?"

"The time has come, Margaret, when you and I must come to an understanding about your—your income."

"Won't it do after dinner?"

"It is a matter for private discussion and we are here alone now. Let us settle it. In the first place," he said impressively, "it is time that *I* took over the management of your finances. Does Walter have them in charge?"

"Daniel," said Margaret gravely, a faint colour coming to her cheeks, "Walter surely did not give you to understand that *I* had any money?"

"No. *You* did."

"I? How?"

"You said you were one of your uncle's heirs."

"Only to the old homestead, Berkeley Hill. Nothing else."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

They looked at each other across the table, Daniel's small, keen eyes meeting steadily her faintly troubled ones.

"Did you think I had money, Daniel?"

"What is the homestead supposed to be worth and how many heirs are there?"

"Hattie and I own it. I don't know what it is worth. It is awfully out of repair, you know."

"But Walter pays you rent, of course, for your share in it?"

"Oh, no, he couldn't afford to."

"Couldn't afford to? When they live like millionaires! Oriental rugs, a butler to wait on the table, solid silver, and expensive china—anyway, it *looked* expensive. And they can't afford to pay you rent?"

"All those things were inherited, Daniel, along with the place, the butler included."

"Then *you* own those rugs and that silver and china?"

"Jointly with my sister, yes."

"But that's property, Margaret. How, then, are you receiving your share?"

"I'm not receiving it."

"Why not? I hate that slipshod Southern way of doing business! You ought, of course, to be drawing an income from your half of that place."

"But it yields no income."

"Isn't any of the land cultivated?"

"The land consists of two square miles of woodland about the house. Walter says the place, as it is, couldn't even be rented; and none of us have any money to spend



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

in fixing it up; so there you are. It's a home for Hattie's family, that's all."

"Gracious!"

"Is it a shock to you to find me penniless?" asked Margaret gravely. "Wouldn't you have married me if you had known?"

She was acutely conscious of the fact that since she had married him for a home, she certainly could not judge him very critically if he *had* married her for a supposed fortune.

Daniel looked at her speculatively. Would he have married her if he had known? Well, he was pretty certain that he would have; that at that time, incredible as it might seem, her charm for him outmeasured any dower a wife might have brought him. But now? Did he rue his "blind and headlong" (so he considered it) yielding to her fascination?

His eyes swept over her appraisingly, over her dark hair, her soft dark eyes, the curve of her red lips, her broad, boyish shoulders, her fine hands clasped on the top of the desk, and he knew that he adored her. Not even in the face of the shock he felt at learning of her pennilessness, and on the head of her audacious defiance of his wishes, could he regret for an instant that she was his—his very own. And it suddenly came to him, with a force that sent the blood to his face, that her being comparatively penniless (for of course he'd insist on getting *something* out of that Berkeley Hill estate), her present absolute dependence upon him made her all the more his own, his property, subject to his will. If she were penniless, he held her in his power. It was with the primitive

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

instinct of a savage that he gloated over his possession, the most precious of all his possessions.

"I shall teach her this much about the value of money (of which she seems as ignorant as a child): that the price of her board and clothing is obedience to me!"

"Yes, Margaret," he at length replied, "I would have married you if I had known you were penniless. I married you because I loved you."

She did not tell him that there he had the advantage of her. She envied him his clear conscience in the matter. A shade of respect for him came into her countenance as she looked at him, a respect she could not feel for herself on the same score.

He took a small blank book from his desk and a crisp ten-dollar bill from his purse and laid them before her.

"This is the first of the month, I shall give you ten dollars a month for pocket money, and you will keep an account of your expenditures in this book and show it to me at the first of each month. Anything you need to buy which this allowance won't cover you can ask me about. You seem to know nothing of the value of money, and it's time you learned. I can't trust you with more than a small sum, since you at once go off and squander it on other people instead of spending it for yourself—or for what you were told to spend it for. No more of that, my dear! Your allowance is for your own needs. When you want to make gifts, you consult me."

She dropped the money into her bag, but she did not pick up the blank book.

Daniel took it up and held it out to her. She hesitated,

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

but dreading further discussion with him if she informed him that she had no intention of accounting to him, like a school-girl, for her use of ten dollars a month, she tucked the book also into her bag.

"You must sign over to me the power of attorney to collect rent from your brother-in-law for your half of that estate. I shall look into the matter, and if I feel that the property justifies it, I'll expend some money on it, and then we can rent it at a high rate, too high, probably, for Walter's means. He'll have to move out and live elsewhere."

Again she did not contradict him, while she privately determined to write to Walter herself that very day and warn him that she was not a party to any suggestions which Daniel might make as to Berkeley Hill.

And Daniel was privately telling himself that it would not be any time at all before he would contrive to get over into his own hands that entire estate.

"Also," he said to her, "I shall claim for you one half of all the contents of the house, the books, pictures, china, silver, furniture——"

"Butler," inserted Margaret.

"Well, we'll leave them the butler," grinned Daniel. "He appeared to be more out of repair than anything else on the place."

The bare suggestion of bringing their family heirlooms into such a setting as that of Daniel's New Munich house seemed to Margaret like horrible sacrilege.

"I'd like to see anybody make Harriet strip Berkeley Hill of half its belongings!" she smiled.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"But if half its belongings are *yours*?"

"Uncle Osmond never meant them to be taken from the old home."

"His will doesn't say so, does it?"

"Of course not. He gave us credit for a few decent feelings."

Daniel regarded her in perplexity. How was it that she could weakly let herself be so absurdly imposed upon by her sister and brother-in-law as to her own property, all she had in the world, and yet, when it came to a matter like this of his secretary, be so hard to manage by a man of *his* resolution?

"He gave you credit, too, it seems, for having no business sense. Well, fortunately for you, you've got *me* to take care of that end for you now. I'll make that estate *yield* something to your sister's advantage as well as yours. And now," he concluded, rising, slipping into his overcoat, and picking up his hat, "just one more word: understand, my dear, that when you act like a naughty, disobedient, small girl"—he punctuated his words by tapping her shoulder with his derby—"you will be treated like one and have your allowance cut off. Eh? So I trust we'll hear no more of this nonsense about my secretary."

"I trust so, too."

"Good!"

"But," added Margaret as they went forth together to the street, "I don't just see how you're going to get out of supporting your legal wife, so long as I consent to *let* you support me."

"You 'consent' to *let* me? Now what do you mean by



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

that nonsense? Some of that 'Feminist' talk, is it, that Miss Hamilton was trying to stuff you with?"

"Never mind," said Margaret. "I won't explain what I mean, for if I do, you'll begin to argue with me; and I refuse to argue any more about anything until I have had a good, square meal."

And so it was that in spite of the revelations of the past hour in Daniel's office, and the talk so illuminating to them both, Jennie and Sadie had the surprise of hearing them come into the house together, laughing and talking as though nothing whatever had occurred to call for their brother's solemn displeasure with his heedless and irresponsible wife.

## XVI

MARGARET did not, of course, think for an instant of giving up her friendship with Catherine Hamilton; but when she suggested the Hamilton family and a few other people whom she liked, but whose names were not on the invitation list, be invited to their big reception, she met with an opposition to which she was obliged to yield.

"To invite such folks as those Hamiltons, that don't even own their own home, *little* as it is—well, it would just lower the tone of the party, that's all!" Jennie pronounced.

"But I'll be responsible for keeping up the tone of the party!" Margaret gayly volunteered.

She quickly recognized, however, that in a matter like this, coöperation or compromise between the Leitzels and her was impossible and that she must stand aside and let them give their party in their own way. She carried her self-obliteration so far as to even refrain from suggesting, on the auspicious day of the party, the removal from the dining-room sideboard of the life-sized, navy-blue glass owl which was a water pitcher, and the two orange-coloured glass dishes that stood on easels on either side of the owl.

She did spend rather a troubled half-hour in wondering how, since the invitations were of course in her name and

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Daniel's, Catherine Hamilton would regard the fact that she was not invited. But the absurdity of the Leitzels' delusion that they could withhold or bestow social recognition upon her friend must be so manifest to Catherine that surely she could not take it seriously. It seemed to Margaret that to let this trifling, vulgar episode cast even a shadow upon the ideal friendship into which she and Catherine were growing was to belittle and dishonour it.

"I can't offer her any explanation. I can only trust to her large-minded understanding of my situation."

She had an uncomfortable consciousness that it was a situation which Catherine herself would not have tolerated.

"Even 'Hiram's Lizzie' considers it unbearable," she reflected. "Why, I can't offer any least hospitality to any one unless my sisters-in-law approve of the individual! I can't ask Catherine Hamilton to dine or lunch with me! Which means, of course, that I can't accept *her* hospitality. It's rather grotesque!"

Yet when she considered how devotedly Daniel's sisters served him, how minutely they attended to every little detail of his comfort, in a way most men, she was sure, would have found harassing, but which to Daniel seemed essential to his well-being, she knew that he would never be able, without great misery, to live apart from them, and that he certainly would not entertain the idea for a moment.

"And as for them, their occupation, their purpose in life, would be taken from them, if they didn't have Daniel to fuss over."

Two days before the date of the reception the evening

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

papers gave New Munich a lurid description, furnished by Jennie and Daniel, of every detail of it, the Philadelphia caterer and the Lancaster florist being advertised in headlines that made Margaret's flesh creep. She had a vision of the consternation of her Charleston relatives should they ever see that paper, and she was thankful that the distance that separated her from them precluded the possibility of their learning of her association with such blatant vulgarity—unless (awful thought!) Daniel should be visited with the idea of mailing them a marked copy!

When, the next afternoon, Margaret was out for a country walk with Catherine Hamilton after office hours, she decided that it would be better to refer casually to the prospective party, rather than so obviously avoid mentioning it.

"Fancy me to-morrow night, Catherine, lined up with Mr. Leitzel and his sisters for two or three hours to shake hands with over one hundred people and make to each one precisely the same inspired remark: 'Mrs. Blank, how do you do? I am glad to see you. I am so glad you got here!' If I could only vary it a bit! But no, I shall have to say those self-same words exactly one hundred and seven times. Isn't it deplorable?"

A faint tremor in her voice as she asked the question caused her friend to turn and look into her face; and something in the strained expression of the beautiful eyes which Catherine Hamilton was growing to love moved this rather austere young woman to a sudden pity; for Catherine, though a girl of keen wit and of a strong, independent spirit, was full of feeling; a combination of qualities which



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

gave her a charm for those of her own sex that she did not have for men.

Obedying an impulse of her heart, she suddenly stopped in the woodsy path where they walked, put her arms around Margaret and clasped her close.

And Margaret, at the unexpected touch of understanding love, almost the first she had ever known in her life, held herself rigid in her friend's embrace that she might not burst into passionate crying, while she clenched her teeth to choke down the pent-up emotion which in this moment could hardly keep its bounds.

She released herself quickly, and for an instant turned away.

When she again spoke, her voice was even and natural. She had not let herself shed one betraying tear.

"You promised to tell me, Catherine, about that career of yours, you know, to which your present work is a stepping-stone, and what *my* part is to be in it."

Catherine, eager to launch forth upon her hobby to her new friend, glowed with enthusiasm as she talked.

"I have come from a race, Margaret, that for generations have been teachers, college professors, ministers, public school superintendents—the pedagogue seems to be born in every one of us. And it's in me strong. So I am going to devote my life to the establishing of a school for girls in which all the training shall converge to one ideal—that of service—as over against that of the usual finishing school, whatever that ideal is! And, Margaret, here's my point: I'm going to make my school fashionable, a formidable rival of those futile, idiotic institutions in

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

which girls from the country are taught how they must enter a drawing-room or step into an automobile, and are quite incidentally instructed, cautiously and delicately, in every 'branch' in the whole category of learning, so that they may be able to 'converse' on any subject whatever without betraying the awful depths of their ignorance!—the vast expanse of their shallowness. My school shall teach girls that life is meant for earnest work, because work means physical and spiritual health and happiness. My school shall make girls ashamed to admit they've ever been to the other sort of 'finishing' school. It's going to put that sort of school out of business, Margaret! I tell you, the coming woman is going to be the efficient woman. The unqualified of our sex will take a back seat, just as unqualified men do."

"I'm of course entirely in sympathy with your idea, Catherine, but I hope your 'service' education includes home-making and motherhood. Leave us a few of the old-fashioned women, won't you?"

"My dear, don't worry about homes and husbands and babies. It is the futile fashionable woman, not the disciplined, thoughtful, college-bred woman, that refuses to have children. I've never known an *earnest* woman that didn't love children and yearn for motherhood. The trouble is, men are afraid of the earnest kind. They marry the frivolous, parasitical women, who live upon them like lotus flowers, sapping their vitality and giving nothing in return. Yet you'll find men opposing college education for women, not realizing that a woman who has stood the discipline of a college course has developed a

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

force of character that does not shrink for a moment from the further discipline and burden of motherhood, but welcomes it as her privilege and blessing, while the so-called 'society woman' will none of it. You know," Catherine continued, "in the days when home-making was necessarily an absorbing occupation, it lent to women a dignity of character quite wanting in our present-day large class of feminine parasites, a class that has grown out of the new and easier domestic conditions and the too-great concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. That's the explanation of woman's latter-day restlessness; she's fighting against the deterioration which comes with idleness and too-easy conditions of life. She's fighting for her very life! *That's* what the 'feminist movement' means."

"And my part in your fine scheme?" asked Margaret, her face glowing with responsive enthusiasm.

"As a rich and influential woman, you will countenance and patronize my school; perhaps send me your daughters; be a stock-holder in it; you can even be fitting yourself, meantime, if you like, to be a teacher in it."

"But, Catherine—'rich and influential?' I? I am neither!"

Catherine looked at her curiously. "What do you call 'rich,' Margaret?"

"Oh, I don't know. I've never handled money in my life. I've always had everything I actually required right at my hand. I am afraid I am absurdly ignorant about money. I never had any of my own."

As Margaret spoke, she glanced up to meet in Cather-

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

ine's eyes a puzzled, questioning expression which she failed to interpret.

"But surely you know that Mr. Leitzel is very rich?" said Catherine.

"It is such a relative term. My sister's family think themselves awfully poor, but they live more comfortably and spend money more freely than the Leitzels do. Of course I understand that you Northerners are all more frugal than Southerners are," she ended vaguely.

Catherine laughed oddly. "You *are* an innocent!"

"I'm beginning to realize that I am," nodded Margaret, feeling a something behind Catherine's tone and countenance that she did not quite get.

"I might have been reared in a convent for all I've seen of life, Catherine."

"Yet you've not lacked the essentials," returned Catherine with evident relief at turning the talk from the subject of money.

"The essentials to what?"

"To making you a truly fine and charming woman. You've lived in an environment of culture, of big ideas; and you've had no sordid money cares to embitter you or blunt the sensitive fineness of your spirit."

"But my life has lacked one great essential, Catherine—affection, love."

"Your uncle must have loved you, dear, he *must* have. For you are lovable, you know. Well, rather!"

"He loved me as his handmaid who kept him comfortable. If ever I tried to be affectionate with him, he would act like a hyena!"



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"If he was human, he loved you!"

"He wasn't human, that was it. He had all run to intellect and hadn't a vulnerable spot left."

"Did you love *him*?"

"I wanted to, but he wouldn't have it. When he died, I did miss him keenly, he had grown to be a habit with me; a stimulant, too. No one could live with Uncle Osmond and not keep very much alive. So of course my life seemed suddenly very empty without him: he had been my chief care and thought for so many years. I suppose I shall never quite get over missing him. But I can't say I ever really grieved for him."

When about a half-hour later, at the end of an exhilarating and satisfying time together which put a new seal upon their friendship, the two young women parted to go to their homes, Catherine considered, as she walked slowly, to give herself time to think, how strange it was that she, as Mr. Daniel Leitzel's confidential secretary, knew so very much more about him and his affairs than did his own wife.

"She actually does not know that she has married a multi-millionaire. And I don't believe it would impress her greatly to discover that she had. She *is* unique! For a woman like Margaret to find herself tied up with those Leitzels, oh!" Catherine laughed to herself at what seemed to her the extreme absurdity of the combination. "But it is so tragic, too! Why on earth did she marry him if not for his money? Will she, I wonder, ever reach the point of telling me why she did? No," she shook her head conclusively, "not so long as she continues to live with

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

him will any one ever hear one disloyal syllable from her, I'm sure. If she ever came to the point of rectifying by divorce the blunder she made in marrying him, for whatever mysterious reason, then perhaps she'll explain herself to me."

Catherine wondered how long it would take Margaret to find out that she was married to one of the richest men in the state.

"If I ever see her inconvenienced by lack of funds, I'll enlighten her with some facts and figures known only to her husband and myself," she resolved. "Even I don't know *all* he has, though I do know what the public doesn't dream of."

She was aware that her employer had, before ever trusting her with any knowledge of his financial affairs, tested and proved her to be a very safe repository of his secrets.

"But his wife, supposed to be one with himself and endowed with all his worldly goods, has a right to know the extent of them. If I don't supply her with any actual facts (which would, of course, roll from her like drops of mercury, leaving no least impression), I can, without treachery to Mr. Leitzel, give her to understand that her husband doesn't spend, in the course of a year, more than one thirtieth of the interest on his capital."

She doubted, however, whether even a succinct statement like that would make any difference to Margaret unless she became a mother; for Catherine believed she had succeeded, though with some difficulty, in impressing upon her friend her own theory that the divine right of

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

motherhood ought to make a woman, by law, a full and equal partner in all her husband's "wordly goods."

"I certainly did have a time persuading her that my theory is of any importance in our modern social economy. Wait until the poor child learns to know the Pennsylvania Dutch idea of woman's economic position, and until she begins to get a *little* acquainted with the man she has married!"

She drew a long breath as she reached the front door of her "rented" home. "Well," she concluded, "my intimacy with my employer's wife promises some excitement!"

## XVII

IN SPITE of the forbearance which Margaret felt she had exercised in her desire to be scrupulously considerate of Daniel and his sisters in everything pertaining to the party, the night of this much-advertised "social event" found her in serious disfavour not only with her sisters-in-law, but with her husband himself; first, because of her persistence in ignoring their dictation as to the sort of gown she should wear; secondly, their discovery that she was taking daily walks with Miss Hamilton; for though Margaret would not stoop to any secrecy as to her relation with Daniel's secretary, yet she had not gone out of her way to publish it, and so the walks had been going on for some time before her three monitors learned of them; thirdly, the exception they had taken to her telling some callers, by whose patronage they felt honoured, that she could not afford a new set of furs! Mrs. Ocksreider had spoken admiringly of the furs she had seen Margaret wearing one day and had asked where she had bought them, and Margaret had replied that she had never bought any furs in her life; that she had always been too *poor* (Danny's wife admitting poverty!), and that these furs had been her grandmother's!—telling Mrs. Ocksreider, of all people, that she wore her grandmother's old clothes!



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

But Mrs. Ocksreider's reply had been puzzling to Jennie and Sadie:

"Oh, but my dear Mrs. Leitzel, to have had a grandmother who wore sable! It ought to admit you to the D. A. R's! No wonder you flaunt them and refuse to buy new ones!"

Then Margaret had further mortified them before this same formidable social leader of New Munich by refusing her invitation to join the Women's Auxiliary of the Episcopal Church, which, as Jennie and Sadie well knew, was made up of New Munich's "leading society ladies"; so what was their horror to hear Margaret reply, "It's very charitable of you to fancy that I'd be of the least use to you. But I've always hated Women's Auxiliaries!" And she said it with such a musical drawl that Mrs. Ocksreider, instead of showing how offended she must be, had laughed as though she found it *funny*. But the idea of saying you hated Women's Auxiliaries! It was next thing to saying that you hated the Bible! Never had Jennie and Sadie experienced such a painful half-hour as that of this call.

Fourthly, Daniel's sisters had at last discovered, through persistent prying, that his wife did not have an independent income; and Margaret, her wits sharpened by her new environment to recognize things at first unthinkable to her, saw that this discovery made Jennie and Sadie feel more free than ever to dictate to her and interfere with her liberty.

All these little episodes combining to bring upon her the displeasure of the household, the night of the party found

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

her in a not very cheerful frame of mind, though the deep satisfaction that was hers in the great friendship that had come into her life, the most vital human relation that she had ever known, made it impossible for these smaller things to disturb her fundamentally, as otherwise they might have done.

There had been one event of that day that had somewhat brightened for her the gloom of the home atmosphere: a belated wedding-gift had come from Daniel's step-mother—a patchwork quilt—accompanied by a letter addressed to Daniel and his wife, written for the old woman by the district school teacher.

“‘It’s a very humble present I am sending you,’” Daniel had read the letter aloud at the breakfast table. “‘But it’s the work of my old hands, dear children, the last I’ll ever do—and the love of my heart went into every stitch of it. I was so proud that you sent me such a notice of your wedding; to remember your old mother, Danny, when you were so happy yourself. I’ve been working on the quilt ever since I got the notice about the wedding already, and now I’d like so well to see your wife, Danny. I’ll try, if I am strong enough, to take the train in, one of these days, and see you both. I’ll come back the same day so as not to make any of you any extra work or trouble. I would like to see the lady you married, Danny, before I die, and give her an old woman’s wishes for a happy, useful life with my good son that I am so proud of. I wish I could live long enough to see your first baby, Danny, but I guess it won’t be many months any more before I must go to my long home.’”

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Yes, that's always the way she talks—she 'hasn't long to live' just to work on our feelings so as to make us *give* her more!" Jennie commented. "She has no need to come in here to see Margaret. She makes herself very bold to offer to. And she can't spare the car fare, little as what she has to go on. What's Margaret to her anyhow? And she's likely to be too feeble to get *back* if she comes in. Then we'd have her on our hands yet!"

But Margaret had spent an hour of the morning in writing to Mrs. Leitzel, acknowledging her gift, telling her how glad she would be to see one who had done so much for Daniel when he was a boy. For their step-mother's self-sacrificing devotion to them all in their childhood had been made known to Margaret through many an unwitting, significant remark dropped in her presence. She concluded her letter:

I am coming out to see you very soon, certainly some day next week. Daniel will bring me if he has time. If not, I'll go myself. Until then, with my heartfelt thanks for the work of your dear hands, which I shall use with pride and with grateful thoughts of you,

I am your affectionate daughter,

MARGARET BERKELEY LEITZEL.

All that day, through the constant little rasping antagonisms which Margaret, despite her good intentions, seemed unable to avert in any intercourse between herself and the Leitzels, she felt that consolatory bit of kindness and good will which had come to her from the old woman in the country. And when she stood at night with her

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

husband and his sisters to receive their guests (Sadie in pink satine) the friendly spirit of her aged mother-in-law was with her still in the background of her consciousness, softening the light of her eyes and making human the perfunctory smile of her lips as she repeated her conventional formula of greeting over and over; so that people marvelled at the apparent continued tranquillity of this incongruously assorted household.

When later in the evening Margaret was free to move about among her guests, Daniel's cold displeasure with her was greatly modified as he witnessed again to-night, as on many previous occasions, how attractive she undoubtedly was to the men of his world. His uncannily keen little eyes read in the faces of his male guests, as they approached and talked with Margaret, the covetousness they felt for this rare possession of his. No acquisition of all his acquisitive career had ever given him a more delectable joy than his realization of the worth, in other men's eyes, of his charming wife.

Had he overheard the view of her which was ventilated, though surreptitiously, by some of the guests over their supper, his satisfaction might have been somewhat modified.

"I think she's a scream!" declared Myrtle Deibert to the group at her table. "Did you hear what she *said* to me as we were leaving the Country Club dance last Wednesday evening, when I remarked to her, 'Your husband is so awfully in love with you, Mrs. Leitzel; just see how he is *beaming* on you from clear across the room!' 'Scowling at me, you mean,' she corrected me.



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

'Don't you hear our taxicab registering out there while I linger to talk to you?'"

This anecdote was met with a shout of laughter, the point of which would certainly have remained obscure to Daniel Leitzel.

"Of course you all heard of her telling mother," said Miss Ocksreider, "that she hated Women's Auxiliaries? And that she wore her grandmother's old furs because she *couldn't afford* to buy new ones? Mother says"—she lowered her voice and the group at the table closed in a bit closer to catch her words—"that it was a perfect circus to see the consternation of Miss Jennie and Miss Sadie when she said she was *poor*. Isn't it queer how they are so proud of their money and yet so afraid to *spend* it?"

"Did you hear," inquired Mrs. Eshelman, "what Mrs. Leitzel said to me last Sunday after church when I told her I'd put a five-dollar gold piece on the collection plate in mistake for a nickel and I had half a mind to ask the usher to let me have it back. 'You might as well,' she said, 'for you know the *Lord* won't give you credit for more than five cents.'"

"She certainly does go to the ragged edge," Mr. Eshelman added his quota; "I asked her this evening whether she had been to hear the evangelist's address to Women Only, and she said no, what she wanted to hear was a talk to Men Only!"

"What do you think she said to me when I told her," said Mrs. Hostetter, "what a bad boy the son of the Presbyterian pastor is. 'This proverbial badness of minister's children,' she said, 'is often, I think, just the

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

hypocrisy of the minister breaking out.' 'But all ministers are not hypocrites,' I said to her, shocked. 'Of course, unconsciously hypocrites,' she answered. 'They don't deceive any one else as they deceive themselves.' Isn't she *queer*?" added Mrs. Hostetter, genuinely puzzled.

"She's a peach!" declared Mr. Hostetter.

"Danny must think so," declared Mr. Eshelman, 'to open up like *this* in her honour!" indicating the elaborate supper provided by the city caterer. "Terrapin, mind you, at Danny Leitzel's!"

"And the 'floral decorations!'" breathed Miss Deibert with an appreciative glance at the roses and palms that decorated the dining-room. "It doesn't seem possible, *does it?*"

"This party is *costing* Danny something!" grinned Hostetter.

"And to think," said Mrs. Hostetter, "that Dan Leitzel has married a *penniless* bride—as she certainly gives it out that she *is*! It doesn't seem possible."

"The power of one little woman!" said Mr. Hostetter pensively. "I tell you that girl's eyes, and her voice, and her figger, and her teeth and lips, would melt any man's heart, even one of flint like Dan Leitzel's!"

"That will *do*, Jacob!" stiffly admonished Mrs. Hostetter.

"Will you look at that blue glass owl on the sideboard," said Miss Ocksreider. "Wouldn't you think Mrs. Leitzel would have removed it before this party?"

"She wouldn't dare! Miss Jennie thinks it's choice!" responded Mrs. Eshelman. "She got it ten years ago at

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

the ninety-nine-cent store for Danny's Christmas present, and she told me at the time that she knew it was an awful price to pay for a mere pitcher, but that they needed a handsome ornament for the top of their sideboard. No, indeed, Mrs. Leitzel wouldn't dare discard that old owl!"

"How she manages to steer her way peaceably among the three members of this household!" murmured Miss Deibert.

"She's a wonder!"

"And she certainly knows how to keep her opinions to herself," said Mrs. Hostetter. "No one gets a word out of her as to what she thinks of her in-laws!"

"Then she *is* a wonder!" volunteered Hostetter.

"Wouldn't I like to be her father confessor!" exclaimed Miss Deibert. "I don't know what I wouldn't give for an X-ray view of her mind!"

It was a curious fact that the only person present at the Leitzels' notable party who was quite unimpressed by the expensiveness of the affair was Margaret herself.

What did impress her, as she chatted with her guests and ate her supper, was the subtlety with which one can be penetrated by the spiritual atmosphere of a given group; she felt so acutely that of this gathering to-night as compared with the fine aroma of any social collection of her Southern environment, with its old inherited simplicity and culture. She had thought, in the first weeks of her New Munich life, that the difference must be only external, for she was not only democratically disposed by nature, but the rather socialistic theories with which her

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

uncle had imbued her inclined her to a large view of any social discrepancies.

To-night, however, it was borne in upon her that she was an alien in this company; that she could more readily find a real point of contact and sympathy with the plainest sort of day-labouring people; with, for instance, the Leitzels' cook, who was at least genuine and not pretentious, than with these people who knew no ideals except those of material possession and whose purpose in life seemed to be, on the part of the women, to outshine their acquaintances and kill time; and on that of the men to make money enough to allow the women to pursue this useful and exalted career.

"People who are poor enough to be obliged to work," she spoke out her reflections to the lawyer, Henry Frantz, who happened to be sipping coffee with her, "have really purer and more wholesome views of life than—than we have" (she indicated, by a turn of her hand, the company at large). "I begin to understand, Mr. Frantz, why, in the history of nations, we see decay set in just as soon as a climax of prosperity has been reached. To survive the deadening influence of great wealth, well, it's only the fittest among nations and individuals who are strong enough to do it, isn't it?"

"But it is only where there is a leisure class that we find art and culture," suggested Mr. Frantz.

"The great minds and the great characters of the world, however, have never come from an environment of wealthy leisure. In our own country, has any one of our really great Presidents been educated in private schools? Nearly



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

every citizen of eminent usefulness is a public school product."

"A notable exception—your husband," he replied.

"‘Citizen of eminent usefulness,’" she musingly experimented with her phrase. "Would Mr. Leitzel come under that head?"

"He's a lawyer of state-wide, if not national, reputation, Mrs. Leitzel."

"I know. Are they an eminently useful class—corporation lawyers? I merely ask for information. My ignorance on most subjects is unfathomable."

"Well, we couldn't get along without them."

"Corporations couldn't. But aren't we beginning to think we could get along without corporations?"

"Boneheads may think so. It is civilization that has built up corporations, and every time a corporation is dissolved we take a backward step in civilization."

"If public utilities," said Margaret dogmatically, quoting her Uncle Osmond, "were conducted for the benefit not of corporations, but by the Government for the benefit of the whole people, we'd have a full treasury without taxing the people."

Mr. Frantz looked at her and broke into irrepressible laughter. "Excuse me, Mrs. Leitzel, but that anything looking so girlish and pretty, that anything even remotely associated with my good friend Danny Leitzel, should be giving out remarks like that—well, it's a little too much for me, you see! Did you and my friend Danny exchange views on social economics before you were married?"

"We didn't have time to exchange views on anything.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

We knew each other just six weeks before we were married."

"And have been getting acquainted since?"

"I'm inclined to think a six weeks' acquaintance just as good as a lifetime one for finding out what kind of a mate your lover is going to make."

"Exactly. No good at all, eh?"

"Not much," she smiled.

"I wonder," speculated Mr. Frantz, eying her curiously, "if there was ever a married pair whose ideal of each other grew *higher* after marriage. Think so?"

"Surely. Their lives being a daily unfolding of new beauties and excellences to each other."

"Oh, but I'm afraid you're a sentimentalist."

"Southerners generally are, but they're saved, you know, by their unfailing sense of humour," she responded, turning from him to give some attention to the man seated on the other side of her at the little supper table.

Mrs. Leitzel's adroitness in avoiding thin ice was the despair of the gossips of New Munich.

## XVIII .

MARGARET'S radiant happiness in the discovery she made on the very day after the party, that she was embarked on the wonderful passage to motherhood, fraught with its strangely mingled suffering and bliss, was somewhat tempered by the consciousness that the coming child would have to be a Leitzel; there was no escaping that catastrophe. She tried to persuade herself that the Leitzel characteristics, if properly educated, might not be so very lamentable; but her deep-down conviction that her child ran the risk of inheriting a small, mean soul gave her no little anxiety and self-reproach.

"My penalty for trying to compromise with life's austerities!" she grimly told herself with sad misgiving.

Her husband's joy and pride in the prospect of being a father consoled her somewhat, it was so human and normal of him; though even here the taint of greed entered in, he was so inordinately pleased that his money would not have to be left to Hiram's children.

Indeed, during the earlier weeks of her pregnancy, Margaret tried hard to keep her mind off the topics discussed in the bosom of the family, so fearful was she of the effect, upon her child, of her own recoil from the Leitzel view of life.

She found that they never would get done talking about

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

the cost of that party; it was evidently going to occupy them for the rest of their mortal lives. The worst of it was they so insisted upon impressing it upon *her*.

"Hiram never spent that much for a party for his Lizzie, and *she* brought her husband thirty thousand dollars. It ain't many husbands that would so spend for a wife that—well, don't you think, too, Margaret, that Danny's awful generous *considering?*"

"Considering what, Jennie?"

"Ach, Margaret, don't be so dumb! Considering you ain't *got* anything."

"Oh, yes, I have something—youth and health and intelligence and good temper. I'm a prize. Daniel thinks so."

"But you see," interposed Sadie, "our Danny could have had any of our rich town girls here."

"And yet preferred me. His good taste. The only instance of it I've ever noticed."

She knew the puzzled despair of her husband's sisters over their inability to make her humbly grateful for that she, a penniless bride, had been "chosen" by their brother. But that she should fail to appreciate the expenditure for the party given in her honour was too much.

"Why, Danny's bills come to three hundred dollars yet!" Jennie told her with heat. "And Sadie ain't well yet from over-eating that rich supper we had that night off of the Philadelphia caterer!"

"Yes, I feel it yet," said Sadie plaintively. "Just to think, Margaret, that Danny spent three hundred dollars for the party for you!"



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Did he get off so easily as that? The flowers were so abundant and the supper so nice, I would have supposed they would have cost more than that, if I had thought about the cost."

"Well, why *didn't* you think about the cost, when it was all for *you*?"

"I didn't think about it, my dears, because the cost of things doesn't interest me; I have so many more interesting things to think about. This, for instance," she said, holding up the dainty baby dress on which she had been sewing as they all sat together in the sitting-room, awaiting Daniel's coming home to his noon dinner.

"But it's a wife's place to——"

Daniel's entrance cut short Jennie's admonitions. The dinner-table talk, however, scarcely relieved the tension on Margaret's nerves.

Daniel was always expansive as to his business "deals" when he felt complacent, and to-day his state of mind was one of unusual satisfaction, for just before dinner Margaret had displayed to him (surreptitiously, to spare the virgin squeamishness of Jennie and Sadie) the baby things upon which she had been working, and his delight in them was like unto that of a woman. He was therefore talkative and confidential over his roast beef.

"Well, Margaret, you can be proud of the way your husband upholds Christian principles in this community. I received in my morning's mail a letter from the Board of Managers of the Y. W. C. A. thanking me for the stand I took at the meeting yesterday afternoon of the stockholders of the Country Club on the question of Sunday

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

sports. Some of the men want tennis and golf allowed on Sunday, but *I* stand for the sanctity of the Sabbath, and I wouldn't give in one inch. I'm the biggest stockholder of the club and they can't go against my vote in anything. I may say I *rule* the Country Club. One fellow, Abe Meyers, got up and declared he'd organize a *new* country club before he'd 'submit to the tyranny of one hidebound Pharisee!' What do you think of that?" chuckled Daniel. "'The tyranny of one hidebound Pharisee!' Sour grapes, of course. He hasn't the cash or the influence to organize another club. I told them that so long as *I* was a member of that club, the sanctity of the Sabbath should be preserved. Golf and tennis six days of the week, but on the Sabbath, *no sports*; and I said I knew I had behind me the support of our Christian community. You see, Margaret, if I withdrew, the club couldn't go on."

"That very fact," said Margaret, her voice rather weak, "ought, I should think, make you unwilling to impose your theories upon the other members. *Noblesse oblige*, you know."

But Daniel was incapable of seeing this point of view.

"The evening papers," he continued, his eyes gleaming with satisfaction, "will give a full account of the meeting yesterday and publish, also, the letter of thanks sent to me by the Y. W. C. A. I handed that letter to a reporter of the *Intelligencer*. You'll see it in to-night's paper, Margaret."

"Oh!" breathed Jennie and Sadie, awe and admiration in their tones, and worship in the glances sent across the table to Daniel. "Here, Emmy," Jennie ordered the

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

maid, "don't you see Mr. Danny's milk glass is empty? Fill it up. Do you like these pickles, Danny? They're the first I opened yet."

"They're of just precisely the degree of sourness I like," Daniel nodded approvingly.

"Danny's so much for sour," Jennie informed Margaret. "Yes, you took notice already, I guess, how he eats sour all the time at his meals, even up to his pie. I have to put up a lot of pickles and Chili sauce and chow-chow for him. Ain't, Danny? And he says no one's sour tastes so good to him as what mine does. I don't know what he *would* do," she said in consternation, "if I was taken and he couldn't have his sour any more."

"There's Heinz's fifty-seven varieties," said Margaret.

"Heinz!" scoffed Jennie. "Our Danny eat that Heinz stuff, used as he is to good home-made sour! Well, Margaret, you don't mean to tell me you'd feed that to our Danny! I'd turn in my grave!"

"I'd 'feed him' Heinz's fifty-seven varieties and tell him I'd made them myself; a plan, you see, which would make Daniel happy while it saved my time and energies for something more useful than pickles."

"You'd deceive him?" exclaimed Sadie, scandalized. "Tell a lie to your own husband yet!"

"Is a lie ever justifiable?" asked Margaret ponderously. "History and psychology answer, Yes; to the insane, the nervously distorted, and to spoiled and pampered men creatures."

"Well, you'd have a hard time fooling our Danny! He

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

ain't so easy fooled. A good thing he's got us to look after him if you wouldn't even put up sour for him!"

"Now I begin to see," said Margaret, "that the man, Heinz, creator of 'sour,' is a human benefactor and should have a noble monument erected to him by put-upon wives. I'll start the movement."

"A stroke of luck," Daniel here broke into the dispute, "came to me to-day. You remember, Margaret, the leather store on the corner of Third and Prince streets?"

"Yes."

"Danny owns near that whole block," Jennie quickly informed her, though Margaret's persistent indifference to such facts was a constant irritation to her and Sadie.

"I've been getting one hundred dollars a month rent for that store," Daniel stated, while his sisters listened breathlessly to such fascinating statistics. "Three months ago, George Trout, the renter, came to me and said he'd have to have more storeroom for his growing business and wanted me to extend the room back into the lot. He laid it off to me how I ought to do this for him because he had rented that room from me for the past fifteen years and had never been a day late with his rent, not even when I had suddenly and unexpectedly raised his rent two years ago from seventy-five to one hundred dollars a month; and he argued that he himself had paid for the repairs and the upkeep of his storeroom for the past eight years; that his successful leather shop had increased the value of my property; and that I certainly owed it to him to extend the floor space. Well, I simply told him that if the place was too small for him, he was perfectly welcome to move;



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

that I certainly wouldn't incur the expense of enlarging the store when I could so easily rent it any time as it was. He argued and fussed 'round my office and said he'd been my faithful tenant for fifteen years and I had never done a thing for him and that I knew perfectly well he couldn't move his business, for there wasn't another vacant storeroom in the town in a location that wouldn't kill his business dead. Yes, I said I knew that all right. 'And,' said he, 'I absolutely require more floor space.' 'Yes, I know that, too,' I said, 'but it's no concern of mine; I have no stock in your business, Mr. Trout. I'm your landlord, and you know business is always strictly business with me. I can rent that storeroom the very hour you move out of it.' He tried to tell me again about his keeping up the repairs, but I cut that short and said he'd got my answer and now I was busy. Well, I certainly was amused to see how mad he looked as he flung himself out of my office. But," said Daniel, his eyes narrowing to the look of cunning from which Margaret was learning to wince as from a touch on a bared nerve, "the affair has turned out just as I foresaw it would! That's the secret of my success, Margaret, as Jennie and Sadie can tell you. I look at every proposition, no matter how small a one, to find in it the main chance—the chance for *me*. I saw there'd be only one thing for Trout to do: enlarge the store at his own expense. No more than right that he should. No least reason why *I* should do it."

"Of course not!" exclaimed Jennie and Sadie in one breath, while Margaret, looking rather wan, did not raise her eyes from her plate, for the self-complacency of her

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

husband's countenance, as he told his yarn, was more than she could stand.

"So, last week," Daniel went on, "when the changes in the storeroom were completed, I went in and took a look around. Trout spent about eight hundred dollars on the job. Of course this enlargement increases the value of the property and demands higher rent. So, yesterday," Daniel smiled, "I notified him that his rent was raised twenty-five dollars a month. He came storming into my office and said the bills for the repairs should be sent to *me*. I pointed out to him that I couldn't be held legally responsible for them, as I had not had them made; and that he could take his choice: pay the increased rent or get out. Well, you see, there was nothing else for him to do *but* pay the higher rent. Anything else spelt ruin for him. He knew that as well as I did. He had to swallow the pill," grinned Daniel, "though it did go down hard! Yes, that's the way I turn things, even little things, right around to my profit, Margaret. Pretty cute, isn't it?"

"If I were Mr. Trout," Margaret returned, looking white, "I'd set fire to your damned store and burn it to the ground!"

There was an instant's silent, awful consternation, when Margaret suddenly laid down her napkin and rushed from the room, every nerve in her sick and quivering with the physical and moral disgust she felt.

When before returning to his office Daniel went to their bedroom, where Margaret, weak and despairing, lay prone upon the bed, he found the door locked against him.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"I insist upon coming in, Margaret!"

"Go away!" she faintly called.

"Open the door!" he commanded.

"I won't! I can't! I don't dare to! I'm dangerous! Go away from me!"

"Get up and open this door!"

"If I did, I'd—I'd *scratch* you! Keep *away* from me!"

Daniel telephoned for the doctor.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Jennie, as they all awaited the coming of the physician in the sitting-room, "Hiram's Lizzie never carried on like *this* when she was expecting!"

"No, she certainly didn't," echoed Sadie; "for all she might have had a little more right to; while Margaret, here, coming to Danny without nothing at all, up and sasses him like what she did at dinner yet! Don't it wonder you?"

Daniel, lounging in his own big chair before the fire, pouted like a thwarted, spoiled child.

"What got into her, anyhow, to act so hystericky all of a sudden?" Sadie speculated.

"Saying she'd set fire to Danny's store!" exclaimed Jennie indignantly. "And *swearing* yet! My gracious!"

"It certainly does, now, beat all!" said Sadie mournfully.

"I certainly didn't think she'd turn out like *this*!" scolded Jennie. "You hadn't ought to have picked out a wife, Danny, without me looking her over for you first."

"I can't do anything with her!" snapped Daniel spite-

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

fully. "Nothing I can say will make her stop running with Catherine Hamilton. She tells me to my face she *won't* give her up. And she won't, either!"

"Och, Danny, I wouldn't *take* it off of her!" said Jennie harshly.

"Well, what can a man do?" he fretfully demanded.

"Discharge Miss Hamilton."

"She's invaluable to me. She's in my confidence in a business way. I *can't* discharge her. It wouldn't matter to her anyway. Every lawyer in town that has any practice would like to employ her. What I'm afraid of is that she'll *resign*. Oh, if she were afraid of losing her job, then I could easily fix Margaret!"

"It looks, Danny, as if Margaret took up with your clerk just to spite and worry you; for what else *would* she run with her for?"

"Well, if you'd hear them talking together once!" Daniel sullenly responded.

"Well, if we did?" questioned Jennie curiously.

"You wouldn't understand a word they were saying!" snapped her brother.

"Do they talk so dumb?" asked Sadie wonderingly.

"They seem to think it means something—the stuff they get off to each other!"

"It certainly does spite me, Danny," said Jennie with sympathetic indignation, "to have your wife use you like this! And when I think how you could have married most anybody!"

"Here comes the doctor," announced Sadie. "Supposing she won't leave *him* in her room?"



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Och, but that would make talk!" exclaimed Jennie. "I'll go up and tell her she *has* to open!"

Margaret, meantime, her sudden gust of passion subsided, realized how foolishly she was acting.

"I can't say I didn't marry him with my eyes open," she prodded herself. "*I* have no right to scorn him and fly out at him. I see that well enough, alas! I owe him everything I can reasonably give him to make up for my lack of love."

Her sense of her obligation to Daniel did not, however, and never could, include the denial of such fundamental principles as her friendship with Catherine Hamilton, or her own personal freedom in so far as it did not clash with his just rights.

Margaret was not so stupid as to suppose for a moment that she could, by any utmost effort on her part, lead Daniel to see a case like that of George Trout's store rent as *she* saw it. That he could flaunt and boast of such "deals" proved him too hopelessly obsessed.

"If he were ashamed of it and tried to hide it, there might be some hope of redeeming him. As it is, I certainly shan't waste myself in any such futile endeavour. But if I outlive Daniel, I shall pay to George Trout or his heirs that eight hundred dollars on the very day that I get possession of my widow's third. Or, if I have a son, *he* shall discharge that debt!"

However, by the time Jennie knocked on her door demanding admission for the doctor, she was in a sufficiently chastened frame of mind to receive both him and her husband with all the outward semblance of a dutifully happy wife.

## XIX

**A**CCUSTOMED as Margaret was to the Southern ideal of the chivalry due to a pregnant wife; reared in a state where a fundamental principle of marriage is that the husband's share in the burden and sacrifice of bringing a child into being shall consist in cherishing the mother of his child with reverence and tenderness, so that her difficult ordeal be made as bearable as unselfish love can make it, and that she be upheld throughout her trial by the man's strength and devotion; and that the husband who did not so regard his wife was a cur to be horsewhipped—Margaret had to learn, during her weary, waiting months, that this attitude of the Southern gentleman would have seemed to the average Pennsylvania German ridiculous sentimentality, his view being that woman was created, in the Providence of God, to be a breeder and that was all there was to it; that in merely fulfilling her natural function she was in no more need of sympathy or help or compassion than a cow in the same condition; that her inclination during pregnancy to tears, tantrums, fretfulness, indolence, a muddy complexion, a phlegmatic indifference to everything except the making of baby clothes, not even her husband getting, at this time, any consideration to speak of at her hands—these things were recognized by him as burdens to be borne either with

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

stoicism, or, for the sake of the child, peremptorily prohibited.

So, it was a matter of wonder to Margaret, rather than of distress, that Daniel should be so extremely moderate in his expression of concern or sympathy for her condition. So used as he was to being taken care of by his sisters, it would have been a wholly unnatural attitude on his part, she saw, to be actively solicitous for a woman. He would have felt he lowered his dignity and made himself absurd if he had put himself out for her comfort in the many little ways he might have done and which she had at first looked to see him do.

But, as Daniel told her one day when she expressed some of the wonder she felt at his lack of chivalry toward her, he had never seen Hiram bother about Lizzie when she was in that condition, and it was after all only Nature.

"A baby's teething is only Nature, but we help and comfort it, don't we? I did expect you'd get a *little* bit excited over my health! It would all be so much easier to bear," she spoke rather to herself than to him, knowing his impenetrability, "if one were treated as a *woman!*"

"As a woman?" Daniel inquired, puzzled.

"Yes, instead of as a cow."

"A cow?"

"Treated as a *Southerner* treats a woman."

"Now I should think," was Daniel's complacent reply, "that when a husband acts toward his wife as I saw your brother-in-law act toward your sister, like a butler or a porter, she wouldn't *respect* him."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"The mediæval peasant idea that if her husband doesn't beat her, he doesn't love her," said Margaret.

But the dreariness of mind Daniel's attitude caused her she, with a sort of mediæval superstition, almost welcomed as being at least some expiation for the sin of her loveless marriage.

Margaret was disappointed to find, as the days passed over her head, that because of her inability to ride on the cars without great physical distress, she was obliged to postpone the promised visit to her mother-in-law; and at last, when her appearance made the little trip no longer possible, she wrote to Mrs. Leitzel and explained the reason for her not keeping her promise.

"But just as soon as your grandchild is able to travel," she concluded her letter, "I shall bring it (not knowing its gender) out to see you."

It seemed to Margaret that, unaggressive though she was, the weeks before her confinement were constantly marked by contentions, apparently inevitable, between her and Daniel about the many things of life which they viewed from diametrically opposed standpoints. Her monthly account of her expenditures with her ten dollars allowance was one of these points of difference. The first time Daniel asked her to produce the little account book he had given her she took it from her desk, scribbled a few words in it, and cheerfully handed it to him, and he read on one page, "Daniel gave me ten dollars," and on the opposite page, "All spent. Balances exactly."

Daniel looked up from the book inquiringly.

"That's as much of an account as you'll ever get from



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

me, Daniel, as to what I did with ten dollars in a whole month! Did you actually suppose I'd give you the items, like a little school-girl?"

And no amount of persuasion, or of fretting and fuming on his part, could induce her to submit to him an itemized account of her allowance.

Her South Carolina property was another bone of contention.

"I can't get a word from that brother-in-law of yours in reply to my letter to him!" Daniel complained one September evening when they were alone in their bedroom just after supper, Margaret, in a pink silk negligé, lying on a couch at the foot of the bed and Daniel seated in an armchair beside her. "The slipshod business ways of those Southerners! What does the man mean?"

"He's such a procrastinator! I must admit Walter's rather lazy. Clever, though. He's considered a mighty intelligent lawyer."

"A clever lawyer has some sense of business, which *he* does not seem to have!"

"Don't you be so sure of that!"

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Well, he does seem to have enough sense of business about him to defraud you out of what belongs to you!" snapped Daniel.

"Walter is an honourable gentleman," Margaret quietly affirmed, "with a sense of honour, Daniel, that to you would be as incomprehensible as a Sanscrit manuscript, or a page of Henry James."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"The quixotic 'sense of honour' of a South Carolinian!" scoffed Daniel. "Oh, I know all about that. Impracticable moonshine! Nothing in it, Margaret. Has no market value."

"No, thank God, it has no market value."

"You're a little simpleton, my dear, about 'values' of any kind, and I wish you wouldn't swear!"

"Can't one thank God except in church and at the vulgar hour of feeding?"

"Be reverent!" Daniel, looking shocked, reproved her. "And I don't see where his sense of honour comes in in his behaviour as to your property!"

"Don't bother about my property, Daniel," Margaret wearily advised. "It's not worth bothering about."

"It's all you have, though," Daniel ruefully retorted.

Margaret offered no reply to this.

"I want you to write to Walter, Margaret, and see whether *you* can get an answer out of him."

"What about?"

"What *about*? Haven't I just been telling you? You write and demand of him why I receive no answer from him to my repeated inquiries as to your property."

"But I have told you all there is to know about it, Daniel."

"Margaret," Daniel patiently answered, "I have already explained to you how I can make that estate yield you a handsome income."

"By depriving my sister of a home? No, thank you."

"Naturally your sister would also profit by what I would do for the estate."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Profit at your expense? Not if you could help it, Daniel."

Daniel laughed appreciatively at this flattering tribute to his business acumen.

"I think I see, Daniel, how you would manage the 'deal.' You'd improve the estate, rent it at a high figure, and keep the rent (at least my share, if not my sister's) to pay you for what you had spent."

"Pretty good, my dear! You have some business cleverness yourself, I see, after all! Sufficient, at any rate, to recognize that you ought to be getting your share of your uncle's bequest. Just inform your brother-in-law, in your letter, that you are going to sign over to me the power of attorney to manage your affairs. *That* will bring him to time and fetch an answer!"

"But I'm not."

"Not what?"

"Not going to sign away any 'power' I may have. I didn't know I had any. It's a pleasant surprise. I shall certainly hold on to it. I need it, whatever it is."

"Without power of attorney to act for you, Margaret, I can't help you. You'll *have* to give it to me," said Daniel firmly. "I'll bring up a paper from the office on Monday and Jennie and Sadie will witness your signature. Can't you get up and write to Walter *now*? I'll dictate the letter."

"I wouldn't rise from this comfortable couch, Daniel, if the house were on fire."

"It's very bad, very bad indeed, I'm sure, for you to lie about so much."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"If *you* were carrying a weight of several tons, I guess you wouldn't be on your feet when you didn't have to."

"Several tons?" That's a gross exaggeration, Margaret."

"I never was strong on figures or statistics," Margaret admitted.

"Won't you *try* to get up and write the letter? I very much wish you to," urged Daniel, still quite unable to credit the fact which in these days frequently confronted him, that any feminine member of his household could fail to jump at his least bidding.

"What do you want me to write?" Margaret parried.

"Great heavens!" Daniel cried, exasperated. "I've told you only about a dozen times!"

"A dozen? A gross exaggeration, I'm sure. And to call upon the heavens is irreverent. There, there, I won't tease you," she patted his hand; and he immediately clasped and held it, for he still adored her. "But as I've told you, Daniel, that I won't sign over to you the power of attorney, there's nothing to write to Walter about."

"Is this your idea of not 'teasing' me? I've said that without the power of attorney, I can't help you."

"I don't want that kind of help, my dear, thank you very much."

"Will you write the letter before I go to the office tomorrow morning?"

"Telling Walter I'm not signing over to you the power of attorney? Is that necessary?"

"Very well, Margaret." Daniel rose with dignity and turned away from her. "I'll dictate to my stenographer



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

what I wish you to say to Walter and I'll bring the letter up from the office for your signature."

"Daniel!" Margaret suddenly exclaimed at mention of his stenographer.

He turned about and looked at her.

"Did you *give* Catherine the note I sent her this morning?"

"I certainly did *not*."

"*Why* not?"

"You ask me to play the messenger boy to my own clerk! I read your silly note, my dear, and burned it."

Margaret, sinking a bit lower among the cushions of the couch, did not trust herself to answer.

"Now, my dear," said Daniel, "since you can no longer go out, you can take advantage of the chance that fact gives you, to *drop* this unseemly intimacy, which no doubt by this time you find burdensome enough, especially as you have seen how exceedingly annoying it is to my sisters and to me. We are willing to overlook your having flouted our wishes if you'll now——"

"Has Miss Hamilton been to see me and been turned away?" demanded Margaret, who for the past two weeks had neither seen nor heard a word from her friend, her notes and telephone calls having both failed to bring any response. She had been deeply wounded and worried at Catherine's seeming unfaithfulness to her in her time of dire need; and she had suffered keenly from the deadly loneliness that had engulfed her; for she had, through almost daily association for many weeks, become so deeply bound to Catherine that she felt she could never again know

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

happiness if she lost her. While she had indeed suspected that some treachery on the part of the Leitzels was keeping Catherine away, yet she did not understand how her friend could possibly have failed to receive at least some of the communications she had sent to her; letters which she would have supposed *must* bring Catherine to her side, if she had to storm the house to get there.

"Have your sisters sent my friend away when she came to see me and kept it from me that she was here?" Margaret repeated in a tone so quiet that Daniel never suspected the volcano it covered.

"She has been told by Jennie every time she called that you wished to be excused. This unseemly intimacy is to *cease*! You will have to understand, Margaret, that I am not a man to be trifled with by a mere woman—a mere girl, I might say!"

"Brave and manly of you, Daniel, certainly."

"If you don't watch out, you will be the cause of my losing the most valuable clerk in New Munich and one to whom I have confided important *private* business matters, for, if I must, I shall tell her *straight* that I object to her running after my wife!"

"Oh!"

"I have already hinted to her that you are at last coming to your senses and getting over your silly infatuation for her. I intimated to her that it was only your appreciation of her valuable services to me which had led you to be very nice and friendly to her."

"Do you suppose for an instant, Daniel, that she was idiot enough to believe that?"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Why shouldn't she believe it?"

"Because she knows me—and she also knows you."

But though Margaret assured herself many times in the course of the wakeful, restless night which followed that Catherine would not believe Daniel's absurd story nor let the family attitude toward her come between them, she really suffered an agony of doubt and fear lest the friendship so precious to her should not be able to stand under the pressure brought to bear upon it.

"Surely Catherine will think I am asking too much of her, to expect her to stick to me through all this! But oh! I can't give her up, I can't! I will not let them separate us!"

The next morning, as soon as Daniel had left the house for his office, she hurried to the telephone and called up Miss Hamilton, knowing that her only chance of getting Catherine was when Daniel was not in his office. She actually trembled with apprehension for fear she should be told that Miss Hamilton had not yet reached the office. But to her joy it was Catherine's own voice that answered her.

"Oh, Catherine! It's Margaret! Catherine, listen! I've been *wanting* you so! I didn't know why you didn't come, and I only learned last night. Catherine, I'm coming right down to the office, now, in a taxicab, and I want you to come out with me for an hour, for I *must* see you to straighten things out. Tell the powers that be that you've a headache or small-pox symptoms or something and just *come*. Will you?"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"I will, dear. I'll leave a note on my desk and walk out *now*, and meet you at the door when you get here."

"I'll be as quick as I can."

She hung up the receiver. But just as she was going to lift it again, to call the taxicab office, her eyes fell upon Jennie and Sadie congregated a few feet away from her, Sadie staring at her in consternation and Jennie in wrath and indignation.

"Margaret!" Jennie suddenly came to her and forcibly pushed her from the telephone. "You ain't to call a taxicab, so you ain't, Margaret! Our Danny ain't to be spited so when *I'm* close by!"

"Very well," answered Margaret coolly, "I'll go next door and use Mrs. Kaufman's telephone."

"But," gasped Sadie, "that'll make talk yet!"

Margaret, not replying, started for the door.

"Margaret!" cried Jennie sharply, hurrying after her and catching her arm, "how that'll *look* yet—you going into the neighbours' to 'phone! You *darsent* go round to our neighbours' making talk!" she commanded. "I won't leave you do it!"

"Then will you let me use the telephone here?"

"No, I won't, not for no such a purpose—to go down to see our Danny's clerk when he don't give you dare to. You're near worrying my poor brother to death with the way you act!"

"Please let go my arm, Jennie."

"You pass me your promise, then, that you'll behave yourself. You're *all* the time raising excitements in our peaceful home that gives Sadie the indigestion!"



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Margaret wrenched herself free and went to the front door; but Jennie got there first, turned the key and removed it from the lock.

"I ain't leaving you disgrace us with our neighbours!" she indignantly affirmed.

Margaret, looking white but resolute, went to a side window, raised it, and called into the Kaufmans' dining-room where the family was then breakfasting, while Jennie and Sadie, foiled, but horrified and incredulous of her audacity, fell back.

"Will you please be so very kind, Mrs. Kaufman," Margaret called across the space between the two windows, when Mrs. Kaufman had raised hers, "as to 'phone for a taxicab for me at once. I have to hurry down to Mr. Leitzel's office. I shall be so much obliged, and I'm very sorry to trouble you at breakfast."

"We're just done, Mrs. Leitzel, and I'll be very glad to oblige you. Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"No, but I *must* get to the office as quickly as I can. Will you please tell them to hurry with the taxicab, Mrs. Kaufman?"

"Yes, of course I will—don't mention it! Your telephone out of order?"

"I can't use it," said Margaret, and with a nod and a smile, she closed the window.

She turned slowly and looked at her sisters-in-law. They, almost leaning upon each other for support, were regarding her as though she were a dangerous lunatic. Without a word, she went past them and upstairs to get her wraps. When she came down five minutes later the

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

taxicab was at the door and Jennie was at the 'phone calling up Daniel's office.

Margaret found, however, that the front door was now unlocked. They evidently felt too uncertain of her to try her any further.

## XX

MARGARET wondered whether, if Jennie succeeded in warning Daniel of her coming, he would again contrive to prevent Catherine's seeing her.

"Wouldn't it make a good Movie! I might have it copyrighted!" she shrugged.

But she told the chauffeur to hurry, hoping that she might, even yet, get to the office before Daniel got there.

"If I don't, and if he tries to keep Catherine from coming down to me—well, if I didn't look such a sight, I would go right up into the office!"

When, however, the taxicab drew up before the building of which the second floor was occupied by Daniel's law offices, and she leaned for an instant out of the cab window, she saw her husband coming down the street. Jennie, then, had been too early for him. Margaret looked about hastily for Catherine, but she saw nothing of her. She shrank far back, then, in the cab to prevent Daniel's seeing her, for he was now close by.

She saw him hesitate at the door of the building and glance inquiringly at the cab; then, curiosity moving him, for Daniel had the petty curiosity of an unoccupied woman, he came over to the curb and looked into the window of the cab.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Margaret met his glance calmly. All she cared about was that he should not prevent her meeting Catherine.

"Why, Margaret! You out of doors! What for? You came for me? Is anything wrong?"

"I came out for some fresh air."

"But to come out on the street!" he protested, scandalized.

"I'm not exposed to view."

"But the chauffeur has seen you!" whispered Daniel, actually colouring with embarrassment.

"He doesn't mind it nearly as much as you do, Daniel. I think he'll recover; he looks robust."

"But what have you come down to my office for?"

As Margaret at this moment saw Catherine coming out of the building, she promptly answered, "To see Miss Hamilton and clear matters up with her. Here she is now."

Daniel turned about sharply, and Catherine, nodding a cheerful good-morning to him, stepped into the cab and bent over Margaret to kiss her.

"But, Miss Hamilton," cried Daniel as his clerk settled herself comfortably beside his wife, "why are you not at your desk?"

"I left a note on your desk, Mr. Leitzel, asking you to excuse me for an hour. I shall be back before ten," she replied, drawing the cab door shut and speaking to him through the open window.

"To the park," Margaret ordered the chauffeur. "Good-bye, Daniel."

"Miss Hamilton," faltered Daniel, but before he could



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

collect his wits to decide *how* he ought to meet so unprecedented a situation, the car started and whirled down the street.

Slowly and thoughtfully he turned into his office building. Never before in all his life had his will been so frustrated as by this young wife of his hearth and home upon whom he showered every comfort, every luxury and indulgence. That any one whom he supported should disobey, defy, and thwart him! It was beyond belief. How did she dare to do it?

"But *what's* a man to do with a wife who doesn't care for his displeasure any more than if he were an old cat!" he raged. "Oh, well," he tried to console himself, "it won't be long, now, until the baby comes, and then surely she'll be different. She'll have to be! I'll find *some* means of teaching her that my wishes can't be disregarded!"

Miss Hamilton's note which he found on his desk stated succinctly that she had an imperative engagement this morning which would make her an hour late.

Daniel, sinking limply into his desk-chair, crushed the note in his long, thin fingers and tossed it into his wastebasket, with the murderous wish that it was his clerk's head he was smashing.

"What will they be when they get the vote?" he groaned. "Women," he said spitefully but epigrammatically, "are the pest of men's lives!"

Margaret, meantime, without once directly referring to her husband and his sisters, had managed to convey to Catherine an explanation of the silence and desolation that had existed between them during the past two weeks; and

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

she was now making a compact with her which she felt must insure them both against any future misunderstanding.

"Tell me first, Catherine, that our friendship means more to you than—than any petty considerations! Please, Catherine, tell me that it does! For I just must have you, you know! You are more to me than I can possibly be to you, for you have your mother, while I——"

She hesitated and Catherine said, "And you, Margaret, will soon have your child. Will that make you need me any less? I don't believe it will, dear. And *my* other dear ones can't in the least fill your place in my life. I can't give you up any more than you can spare me. Nothing," she said with decision, "shall separate us."

"Then," said Margaret, pressing Catherine's hand, "hereafter, when you come to see me, ring the bell four times by twos, and I, knowing about the hour to look for you, will be on hand to let you in myself."

"All right. I will."

"Catherine! You *are* large-minded!"

"My dear!" protested Catherine, "'large-minded' to be indifferent to the eccentricities of—well," she closed her lips on the rest of her sentence, "two illiterate, vulgar old women," was what she had nearly said; but she left it to Margaret's imagination to finish her remark.

"While you are ill in bed, I suppose I shan't be able to get near you," she ventured. "It will be dreadful if I have to wait nearly a month before I can see that baby! It's going to be awfully dear to me, Margaret! Next thing to having one of my own."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"I couldn't wait a whole month to show it to you. I'll ask the doctor to bring you to me."

"We'll manage somehow," affirmed Catherine.

Margaret, looking rather pale, did not answer, and Catherine suddenly put her arms about her and kissed her.

"You poor child!" she said tenderly.

"I'm not a good fighter," Margaret sadly shook her head. "And there are so many, many adjustments to be made, I——"

She stopped short and bit her lips to keep back the tears that sprang to her eyes.

"At least," said Catherine encouragingly, "you seem to be coming to your ordeal, dear, with plenty of courage; and that's the main thing just now."

"Oh, Catherine, I'm willing to go through a lot for the sake of holding a baby of my own to my heart!"

"Then you think, Margaret, that motherhood is going to be all that it's cracked up to be?"

"Under ideal conditions," said Margaret, "I can see nothing greater to be desired."

"But do the ideal conditions ever exist?"

"I suppose they seldom do."

"Sometimes I've had my doubts," said Catherine. "The male poets and painters exalt the beauty, the holiness of motherhood, and the women bear the burden and pain of it."

"But when women whose lives have had the largest horizon—women like Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Margaret Fuller—have declared that their motherhood

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

was the crown and climax of all their experiences of life, I suppose the poets and painters are not very wrong about it, Catherine."

"I hope they are not, since all my instincts about it are entirely primitive and I feel that nothing in the world will compensate me if I've got to go through life childless."

"There would be one compensation," said Margaret earnestly.

"What?"

"Sometimes, since I've known I was going to have a child, the responsibility, the almost crushing responsibility, has seemed more than I could bear. That's what I meant when I spoke of ideal conditions."

Catherine held back her mental reply to this, which was, "Yes, we *should* be careful whom we marry, and *why* did you tie up with a little rat like Danny Leitzel?"

What she did say was: "You didn't feel this crushing sense of responsibility until after you found yourself pregnant?"

"No. Before that I thought only of my own happiness in having a baby to cherish. But, Catherine, when we look about us and see what life can do to us, I wonder how we ever dare, under *any* conditions, to bring a child into this awful world!"

"We can't question the foundations of the universe, however."

"No, but we can question modern civilization, which produces a huge population of criminals, lunatics, degenerates, and incapables."

"Think of pleasant things, my dear!"



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"I try to. To tell you the truth, in spite of my heavy sense of responsibility, I can hardly wait, Catherine, until I have my baby! I want to show you the lovely little embroidered dress Harriet sent me. Will you come in to see it and me this afternoon after four o'clock?"

"Yes."

"I'll be on the watch."

"All right," Catherine nodded.

"The baby received another present, the other day, which touched me very much," added Margaret. "A cunning pair of socks from its grandmother which she knit herself."

"Its grandmother? But——"

"I mean Mr. Leitzel's step-mother."

"Oh!"

"Did you ever happen to see her, Catherine?"

"Once. She came to the office once to see Mr. Leitzel."

Catherine's tone of withdrawal, as though she feared to be questioned, piqued Margaret's interest.

"What was your impression of her?"

"Margaret, your husband's mother has an unforgettable face! There's a benediction in it, such sweetness, refinement, and simplicity shine in her countenance. When she had talked to me for a while, I felt as a good Catholic must who has been blessed by the Pope. Just the sort of person (with a heart too tender to hurt a fly) to be herself easily victimized by the human vultures that prey upon the too confiding."

"Has anybody victimized her?" Margaret casually inquired.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Catherine hesitated an instant before she answered: "Righteousness *is* sometimes a breastplate to protect the otherwise defenceless. It is that dear old woman's extraordinary conscientiousness that has saved her from being *entirely* devoured by the vultures, though she has certainly been gnawed at pretty hard. I can't explain to you, now, just what I mean. Some day, perhaps."

"Oh, do tell me, Catherine."

Again Catherine hesitated before she replied: "She made a certain promise to her husband on his deathbed which her conscience has never allowed her to break, though she has always believed that she was acting against her own interests in keeping it. But it's her loyalty to her promise that's been her breastplate; that has saved her from the vultures."

Margaret considered in silence this suggestive bit of information. It was rather more lucid to her than Catherine suspected. But she was impressed with the sudden realization she had of her friend's intimate knowledge of Daniel's affairs and it flashed upon her that perhaps his seemingly unreasonable objections to their intimacy might have quite another explanation than that he had given it.

In this, however, she was mistaken. Daniel entirely trusted the discretion of his clerk. Not so much because he believed her bound in honour to keep his secrets as because it was the part of a first-class clerk (which she was) to be discreetly silent as to her employer's business operations.

"And now, my dear," Catherine broke in on her thoughts, "since we've threshed things out and have made a com-

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

pact that we will not again misunderstand each other, I think I'd better get back to my 'job.'"

Margaret gave the order to the chauffeur; and when a little while later, alone in the taxicab on her way home, she found her heart overflowing with a sense of the fulness, the richness of life, and considered how strenuously Daniel and his sisters tried to take from her the comfort, the happiness, of companionship with Catherine and how impossible it would be to make them see *what* that companionship meant to her, she felt greatly strengthened in her resolve to resist, steadily and persistently, their aggressions upon her personal liberty.

At her own door, as she opened her purse to pay for the cab, she found she had remaining of her monthly allowance only two dollars and the chauffeur's price was three dollars. She hesitated an instant, then telling the man to charge the cab to Mr. Leitzel, she got out hastily and went indoors.

"Rather hard on Daniel to make him pay the costs of my plots gotten up to circumvent *his* plots! He won't like it. Ah, I've a bright idea! I'll tell him to deduct the three dollars from my next 'allowance.' That will appease him."

But on second thoughts she realized that that same bright idea would surely occur to Daniel without any suggestion from her.

## XXI

MARGARET felt an impersonal curiosity as to what Daniel would say to her when he came home to his dinner at noon. Jennie and Sadie were also curious as to that. But Daniel himself was curious, too. How *was* a husband to meet such unnatural behaviour in a wife? Did other men's wives so disregard their husbands' wishes and commands? If women got much more independent it would break up the holy estate of matrimony altogether.

He finally decided, on his homeward walk, that about the only course open to him was to take refuge in a dignified silence, though now that Margaret's time was drawing near, he felt sufficiently apprehensive of the outcome to be very leniently inclined toward her. Funny how he cared for her when she treated him the way she did! He could not help it, somehow. She certainly had a way with her! Well, when she was over her trial and quite herself again, he'd have another try at bringing her to a proper sense of the consideration to which he was accustomed and which was his due.

He wondered uneasily what the people of the town thought of this incongruous intimacy between his clerk and his wife. It certainly passed his comprehension as much as it did that of his sisters that a girl as "high-



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

toned" as Margaret was should insist upon being intimate with his stenographer. That Miss Hamilton was equally "high-toned," he was incapable of recognizing. Jennie had voiced his own sentiments when a few days before she had exclaimed, "When she *could* run with *anybody*, she goes and picks out an office clerk! It's nothing else, Danny, but that she's bound to act *contrary*, to show us she don't care if she *didn't* bring you a dollar to her name!"

However, a letter which he found on the hall table when he reached home diverted not only his own attention, but that of the whole household, from Margaret's case.

It was from the school teacher of Martz Township, who wrote in behalf of his step-mother; and after dinner, as the family sat together, as was their custom, in the sitting-room, for an hour before Daniel went again to his office—Jennie and Sadie fussing about him to make him comfortable, adjusting the window-blind, placing his chair, handing him the newspaper, retying his necktie, brushing his coat collar—Daniel presently opened and read the letter he had received.

Margaret listened to it and to the lengthy discussion which followed with an attention that was to bear early and abundant fruit.

"DEAR FRIEND:

"I am writing for Mrs. Leitzel, to leave you know she had it so bad in her lungs here the past couple weeks the neighbours thought it would give pneumonia, but she got better and now she's up again, but very weak, and I'm leaving you know that we think she ought not to live alone a half a mile away from her

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

nearest neighbour, because if she got so sick that she couldn't help herself, she might die before her neighbours found it out yet that she needed help. And she's too feeble any more to make up her fires and fetch her water from the spring and chop her wood. The house not having any modern improvements, and so much out of repair, it makes it harder, too, for such an old woman. And she has hardly anything to live on. The neighbours say she had either ought to have some one with her, or you ought to take her to your home to live. If not, she'll have to go the poorhouse, and that of course you would not want, either.

"She is better now and says to tell you not to worry, but I warn you she may get down sick again any time, as old as what *she* is. And I think you have got good cause to worry, though I told her I'd tell you not to. If it hadn't been for the neighbours doing for her this last couple weeks, she'd have died.

"Yours truly,

"MAYBELLE RAUCH.

"P. S. She says she sends her love to all and that you have got no need to worry."

But Daniel and his sisters did seem to think they had "need to worry" very much, at the startling revelations of this letter, not the revelations as to their step-mother's sufferings and needs, but as to the neighbourhood publicity given to their neglect of her.

"To think she'd go and have that busybody teacher and all her other neighbours in and complain to 'em all like this, so's they write to us yet and ask for help for her! Well, this beats all! She never went *this* far before!" scolded Jennie.

"Yes, I don't see why she couldn't leave us know herself if she's got any complaints, and not put it out to the whole township like this!" Sadie worried.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"It certainly will make talk out there!" Daniel frowned.

"Enough to get into the newspapers if she doesn't watch out!"

"But how," Margaret ventured a question, "could she let you know except in the way she's taking, since she can't write herself? And how could she help having the neighbours in if she was ill and helpless and alone?"

"She could anyhow have sent us a postal card to say she was sick and wanted one of us to come out," said Jennie.

"Would you have gone to her?"

"Of course one of us would have gone."

"Maybe she couldn't even write a postal card, or get out to mail it if she did write it, if she's so old and feeble, and was ill."

"If that was the case," said Daniel, "then to avoid a repetition of the occurrence, I don't see what else we are to do but put her into a home."

"You know how she's against that, Danny," said Jennie. "If you decide to do it, you'll have a time with her! And those neighbours all taking her part!"

"This impertinent teacher," said Daniel, tapping the letter he held, "has the face to reproach us, you notice, for not keeping the place in repair! It wasn't our business to keep it in repair when we never get any rent for it."

"Yes, it does seem as if Mom might have kept it in repair when she was getting it rent free," said Jennie. "I don't see why she has not been able to save something in all these years from what she's earnt from her vegetable garden."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"She certainly hasn't managed good," said Sadie.

"And to think of the cheek of those neighbours!" said Jennie wrathfully. "Saying we had ought to take her in here to live with us yet! As if she was our own flesh and blood!"

"What would *Hiram* say to something like this coming!" Sadie speculated; "when *he* thinks we did too much in not charging her rent."

"Well," Daniel suddenly announced with a magnanimous air that seemed to swell his chest, "I'll send her a check. I'll send her five dollars. Maybe I'll make it ten."

"Ten dollars yet, Danny!" said Sadie, regarding her brother with affectionate admiration.

"I'm not sure I'll send as much as ten. But anyhow five."

"She'll be sure to show the check around to prove to those neighbours how good you are to her."

"And there will be some among them," said Daniel indignantly, "that will be ready enough to call it stingy!"

"Oh, well, some folks would say it was stingy if you sent her twenty-five dollars yet!"

"If you and Sadie want to put a little to what I send," Daniel tentatively suggested, "we might make it ten or fifteen."

"Well," said Jennie reluctantly, "*it ain't* fair for you to pay all, either. What do you say, Sadie?"

"Well," Sadie hesitatingly agreed; "for all, I did want to get a new fancy for my white hat. How much will you give, Jennie?"



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Well, if you and I each give two-fifty to Danny's five or ten, *that* ought to stop her neighbours' talking out there."

"All right," Sadie pensively agreed.

"No use asking Hiram to contribute," Daniel growled, "when he thinks we ought to charge her rent for the place. He gets angry whenever he hears I gave her a little. I told him once, 'If I can better afford than you can to give her a little, and I don't ask you to help out, what are you kicking about?' 'It's the principle of it,' he said. 'If you give her money, it's admitting you *owe* it to her, or you wouldn't give it to her. Now I contend that we don't owe her anything.' 'Well, then,' I said, 'when I give her a little now and then, I'll put it down on my accounts under Christian Charities. Will that satisfy you?' But no, even that didn't satisfy him. He's all for putting her to a home. And it looks now as if that's what we'll have to do pretty soon," Daniel concluded, rising to go to his office.

Margaret looked on in silence as Jennie and Sadie each counted out carefully from their purses two dollars and a half and passed it over to their brother.

"I'll send a check, then, to mother for fifteen dollars," he said as he put the money into his own purse. "I'll make it fifteen," he nodded. "I'm willing to make it fifteen. That will certainly settle the gossips out there and keep her going for a while comfortably."

He came across the room to Margaret's chair by the window.

"Good-bye, my dear," he said, bending to kiss her; and

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

it took all her self-control not to shrink in utter repugnance from his caress.

"Oh!" she inwardly moaned as she turned to gaze out of the window when he had gone, "what crime have I committed in marrying a man I——"

But even her innermost secret thought recoiled from the admission that she *despised* her husband, the father of her child.

She went upstairs to her room to spend the time, while she waited for the hour of Catherine's arrival, in putting some last touches to the baby outfit she had made and in writing a note to Daniel's step-mother expressing her sympathy with her recent illness and reiterating her promise to come to see her as soon as possible after her confinement.

"I'll mail it *myself*," she decided as she sealed and stamped her letter, "or give it to Catherine to mail."

At four o'clock, feeling a little nervous, but quite determined, she went downstairs to await the signal ring at the door. As it was ten days since Catherine had been to the house, Margaret hoped that Emmy, the maid, was off her guard, unless the episode of this morning had caused Jennie and Sadie to renew their watchfulness.

"It's so stupid of them, to say the least, to imagine I'd submit to such interference in my own personal affairs!" she reflected.

She knew their suspicions would be aroused if they found her in the parlour, for of late she spent most of her time in her own room. But she felt quite ready to deal with them as effectively as she had done that morning.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

She had not been downstairs long when a ring at the door-bell brought her to her feet, only to sink down again trembling, for it was not the four by twos agreed upon between her and Catherine; and a moment later Mrs. Ocksreider was shown into the parlour. Jennie and Sadie came directly into the room to receive with much satisfaction this distinguished and now frequent visitor who, until Daniel's marriage, had confined her calls on them to once a year; and they looked surprised to see Margaret already there.

"Were you *expecting* Mrs. Congressman Ocksreider that you're down already?" Jennie suspiciously inquired, when the sisters had greeted Mrs. Ocksreider obsequiously.

"No, but I'm expecting Miss Hamilton," Margaret quietly announced. "I have an appointment with her at four-thirty. When she comes, I shall have to ask you all to excuse me."

Jennie and Sadie looked the consternation they felt at Margaret's audacity, not to say disrespect, in asking such a person as Mrs. Ocksreider to excuse her because of an appointment with that Hamilton girl!

"It's to be hoped," Jennie rapidly thought, "that Mrs. Ocksreider will think it's a *business* appointment she's got with our Danny's clerk," while Sadie ostentatiously consulted her new wrist-watch to see how soon they might expect the objectionable Miss Hamilton.

"You and your husband's stenographer seem to be great friends," said Mrs. Ocksreider with what seemed to Margaret a rather malicious enjoyment of her sisters-in-law's evident discomfiture.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"We are," said Margaret.

"I've always heard those Hamiltons very well spoken of, as very nice, worthy people," Mrs. Ocksreider said in a tone of kindly condescension. "Where do they live, Mrs. Leitzel?"

That Mrs. Ocksreider shouldn't even know where they lived, put them of course outside the pale. Jennie and Sadie suffered acutely at Margaret's reply.

"They live in a small rented house on Green Street," she said, and added: "One of the few really distinguished homes in our town."

"Distinguished?" repeated Mrs. Ocksreider, puzzled.

"I mean, rather, it is a home that has distinction, by reason of its inmates and its furnishings."

"Its furnishings?" questioned Mrs. Ocksreider, still puzzled.

"Its pictures and books and general good taste. One of the few households that *have* pictures and books."

"Oh, but we all have pictures and books, Mrs. Leitzel!"

"*Real* pictures, I mean, and real books, too."

"But I'm sure most families of our class have the classics in their homes," Mrs. Ocksreider protested.

"The classics' do help to furnish a room nicely, don't they?" Margaret granted. "But the Hamiltons have books which they *read*. French and German as well as English."

"Well, of course, a public school teacher's home would be likely to have all kinds of books," Mrs. Ocksreider conceded, "that society people wouldn't buy."

"Of course," Margaret agreed.



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"But I don't see why that should make their little home on Green Street what you called it—'distinguished.'"

"But I said the furnishings *and* the inmates gave it distinction. You see, I know because I am very intimate with them."

"I have heard that you were. It is so nice for your husband's little stenographer that you should take her up like that. It's so unusual, too. She's very fortunate, I'm sure."

"It's rather she that has taken me up. I'm quite proud that she thinks me worth the time she gives me. You see she's more than Mr. Leitzel's stenographer: she's an able law clerk. Mr. Leitzel says she's indispensable to him."

"Then he and his sisters share your enthusiasm over the Hamiltons?" Mrs. Ocksreider inquired in a tone of polite skepticism.

"I am the only one of us all who is intimate with them," Margaret complacently stated.

"I didn't see them at your reception last fall, did I?"

"They didn't come," Margaret readily answered. "You know they don't go into society at all."

Jennie and Sadie felt cold as they heard these shameless admissions, their Danny's wife bragging of her intimacy with people whom she openly advertised as living in a rented house on a side street and as not going into society! Not to go into society was, in the Leitzels' eyes, to be so abjectly unimportant as to make you want to get off the earth. And Margaret *flaunted* it!

"Ain't she the *contrary* piece though!" Jennie inwardly raged.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Ah!" Margaret almost jumped from her chair as the door-bell at this moment rang "four by twos."

"That's Miss Hamilton now," she announced, rising and walking as quickly as she could (which was not very quick) across the room. "Will you please excuse me, Mrs. Ocksreider? I am sorry, but it is an appointment——"

But as she reached the door which opened into the hall, she saw the front door closed abruptly by Emmy, the maid.

Instantly stepping back into the parlour, Margaret hurried to the window, rapped upon it, then raised it and leaned out to speak to Miss Hamilton on the pavement. "Emmy made a mistake; I *am* at home, Catherine. Come back, and I'll open the door."

She closed the window and again made her way heavily across the room, smiling in a friendly way upon Mrs. Ocksreider as she passed her. "A mistake of the maid's. I'm seeing so few people just now," she dropped an explanation on her way.

Mrs. Ocksreider's subsequent description of the scene, in which the Leitzel sisters' horror at Mrs. Leitzel's innocent candour about "those Hamiltons," and the young woman's clever outwitting of her two would-be "keepers," afforded most delectable entertainment to New Munich society for two months to come.

## XXII

**I**T WAS late in October that the twins were born, a boy and a girl, and Margaret did not rise from her bed for a month. It was six weeks before she got downstairs.

Long before the trained nurse left her, she realized what, before her confinement, she had dimly foreseen, the struggle to the death which she would certainly have with Jennie's strong prejudices in favour of old-fashioned country methods of taking care of a baby. It was only the doctor's powers of persuasion that induced the nurse, harassed beyond endurance by Jennie's interference with her methods, to remain with her patient until she was no longer needed.

"You poor thing, you certainly are up against it!" was her parting bit of sympathy to Margaret. "She'll kill off those precious twinlets for you, or she'll kill *you*. *One* of you has got to die! The woman's a holy terror, my dear! And the other one, that wears Mother Hubbards and Kate Greenaways and Peter Thompsons and Heaven knows what, she's nearly as bad as her sister about these babies. *I* don't know what you're going to do! You may be able to protect them when you're *with* them; but you've got to get out *sometimes* for an airing without dragging the baby-coach along, and those two"—indicating, with a twirl of her thumb, the twins' redoubtable

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

aunts—"will certainly kill off your babies for you while you're out."

"If you're sure of that I'll never *go* out."

"And you can't look for your husband to help you any," continued the nurse. "Crazy as he is over the twinnies, he'll *help* the old ladies kill them off, because he thinks their ancient ideas are right. The old ladies, for that matter, are nearly as crazy over the babies as he is. You'd think nobody but Mr. Danny Leitzel had ever *had* twins before. I never saw such a looney lot of people. But it's their love for those children that's going to make them kill them, for it does beat all the way you can't knock a new idea into any of them."

In the very hour of the nurse's departure, Jennie, supported by Sadie as always, swooped down upon Margaret to insist, with the triple force of conviction, of tyranny, and of her love for Danny's precious babies, that they be brought up as she knew how babies should be, and *not* by the murderous modern methods of exposing them to the night air, of bathing them all over every day even in winter, of feeding them, even up to the age of one year, on nothing but milk, of taking them outdoors every day in winter as well as in summer.

"Many's the little green mound in the cemetery that hadn't *ought* to be there!" Sadie sentimentally warned Margaret. "So you let *us* teach you how to take care of Danny's babies!"

Well, the conflict or convictions between the mother, on the one side, and the aunts and the father on the other, was not settled in a day, nor yet in a week. It was,



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

indeed, prolonged to the inevitable end. But while the strife and tumult of battle raged, the mother's will was carried out, at the cost to her of a nervous energy she was in no wise strong enough to expend.

The fact that the twins thrived wonderfully under Margaret's régime did not in the least modify the Leitzels' prejudice against it. Daniel could not help believing profoundly in the wisdom of his sisters, since they had made such a success of *him*. And never once in his life had he failed to "come out on top" when following their advice. He admired and respected them; and he felt as much affection for them as he was capable of feeling for any one. So that, with his loyalty to them challenged by that force which to most men is the strongest in life—the love of a woman—the atmosphere of his home was, just at present, rather uncomfortably surcharged.

But in spite of this and of his actual bewilderment at the continued obstinacy of a wife who, though tenderly beloved, indulged, and petted, dared to stand out against not only his sisters but against himself, Daniel was so radiantly proud and happy at finding himself the father of a son and daughter at one stroke that he discussed with every one he met the charms, the characteristics, the food, and the habits of his offspring; told his colleagues in business what food-formula agreed with his girl baby, who was being brought up on the bottle, the mother being able to nurse only one child and that one being, of course, by his wish, the boy; delivered to every one who would hear him his views on Modern Fallacies in the Care of Infants; and invited the opinions even of his employees as

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

to suitable or desirable names for the daughter, the son being of course Daniel, Junior.

It was one mild day in January, when, after a siege of more than usually bitter opposition on Jennie's part to the twins being kept on the piazza all the morning, Margaret found herself, during the afternoon, in a blessed solitude in the family sitting-room, Jennie and Sadie having gone out calling. So tired and heartsick was she that she did not even feel any desire to call up Catherine and ask her to share her few hours of freedom from interference and fear of harm to her babies. The twins were again healthily sleeping on the porch outside the sitting-room and Margaret gave herself up to the sweet peace of this respite, reading, dreaming, resting, when presently the door-bell rang, and a moment later Emmy ushered into the sitting-room a feeble old woman dressed in the plain religious habit of the Mennonites.

Margaret instantly knew who the visitor was, and as she went to her, took her two hands in both her own, kissed her and looked down into the motherly old face with its expression of childlike innocence and sweetness, she was thankful that the rest of the family was not at home and that she could for a little while bask in the warmth of this kindly human countenance.

When she had made her visitor comfortable in Danny's big easy-chair before the fire and had had Emmy bring in some hot tea and toast, the old woman's beaming gratitude betrayed how unlooked-for were such attentions in this home of her step-children.

"I'll soon get my breath," she feebly said as she sipped

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

her tea. "I do get out of puff so quick, still, since my lungs took so bad this fall."

"It was really too much of a trip for you to take, and all alone," said Margaret solicitously. "I was just this very day deciding that I would go out to see you some time this week, if I could manage it. It's very hard for me to get away or I should have been to see you before this."

"Well, my dear, what brang me in to-day was that I just had to see Danny and the girls on a little business, and so my neighbour fetched me in in his automobile. I couldn't spare the money to come by train. But," she said tremulously, "he made his automobile go so unmanly fast, I didn't have no pleasure. He said he ain't commonly got the fashion of going so fast, but, you see, he raced another automobile. He took me along for kindness, but indeed I'm sorry to say I didn't enjoy myself."

"It was a strain on you, I can see," said Margaret sympathetically.

"But the tea's making me feel all right again," said Mrs. Leitzel reassuringly. "It's wonderful kind of you to give it to me; but I didn't want to make no bother. I seen Danny down at his office, and when he told me the girls wasn't home this after, I came up here on the chanct of seein' you alone, and them dear little twinsees! Indeed I felt I *got* to see them two twin babies before I died a'ready. You see I knowed by your nice letters to me that you'd treat me kind, and indeed I had afraid to try to go back home alone on the train; I conceited that mebbly *you'd* take me to the depot," she said with timid wistfulness, "and put me on the right train, and then I wouldn't have

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

so afraid. Danny thinks I went straight off home by myself. But indeed I didn't darst to."

"Of course I'll take care of you. But you must not think of leaving before to-morrow when you've had a chance to get thoroughly rested."

"Oh, but, my dear," said Mrs. Leitzel nervously, "Danny give me the money to pay my way back home and he thinks I went. And you see, it would put the girls out to have to make up the spare bed just for *me*."

"But who could be more important than you—you who took care of them all when they were children? Indeed I shan't let you go a step to-day."

"Did *they* tell you I took care of them, my dear?" asked Mrs. Leitzel, puzzled. "Because they never talked to me that way. And Danny tried to show me this after, when I put it to him that now I couldn't hold out no longer to support myself gardening on the old place—he said I hadn't no claim on him. I don't know," she added sadly, "what I'll do. I'm too old and feeble to work any more, my dear. God knows I would if I could. I'd work for all of them as well as for myself, the way I used to, if I had strength to. But I come in to-day to tell Danny that at last I'm done out. Yes, the doctor says I got tendencies and things and that I got to be awful careful."

"Tendencies?" asked Margaret.

"He says I got somepin stickin' in me."

"Something sticking in you! Do you mean that you swallowed a bone or something?"

"No, my dear, I didn't swallow nothin'. I got a tendency stickin' in me that might give pneumonia. So I



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

come to ask Danny to-day if—if he couldn't mebbby spare me something," she faltered, "to live on for the little time I got left, so that"—a childlike fear in her aged eyes—"I don't have to go to the poorhouse!"

"When you told Danny all this," asked Margaret, laying her hand on Mrs. Leitzel's, "he said you had no claim on him?"

The old woman's lips quivered and she pressed them together for an instant before she answered.

"He told me he'd talk it all over oncet with Hiram and the girls. But," she shook her head, "I'm afraid Hiram's less merciful than any of my children and he'll urge 'em to put me to such a home for paupers; and, oh, Margaret—dare I call you Margaret?"

"What else would you call your son's wife, dearie?"

"I have so glad Danny has such a sweet wife! I wouldn't of believed *he'd* marry a lady that would be so nice and common to me. It wonders me! I can't hardly believe it!"

"But you are good to *me*, making me that lovely quilt and the baby socks. I use the quilt all the time and one of the twins is wearing the socks *now*. How could even Hiram be hard to *you*?"

"But Hiram and the others is wery different to what you are." Mrs. Leitzel shook her head. "Danny says if he did pay me a little to live on, Hiram would have awful cross at him. You see, my dear, the reason I ain't got anything saved, as they think I had ought to have, is that I never could make enough off of the wegetables I raised in the backyard to keep myself and pay for all the repairs on the

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

old place, for all I done a good bit; enough anyhow to keep the old place from fallin' in on me. I don't know how I'd of lived all these years if it hadn't of been for the kindness of my neighbours. And now Danny says if I can't keep myself at *all* no more——” Again she pressed her lips together for an instant. “He don't see nothing for it but that I go to a old woman's home. He calls it a old woman's home, but he means the poorhouse.”

“Mother,” said Margaret, clasping the hand she held, “I wish you would tell me the whole story of your life with Daniel and Hiram and ‘the girls.’ Begin, please, away back at ‘Once upon a time.’”

Mrs. Leitzel smiled as she looked gently and gratefully upon Daniel's young wife who wasn't too proud to call her “Mother.”

“Well, my dear, I married John Leitzel when Danny was only six months old, because them children needed a mother. John drank hard and it was too much for them young folks to earn the living and keep house and take care of a baby. I married John because I pitied 'em all and so's I could take hold and help. Jennie was fifteen, Sadie ten, and Hiram five, and then the baby, Danny. I sent the three older ones to school and I took in washings and kep' care of the baby and did the housekeeping and the sewing. I kep' Jennie in school till she could pass the County Superintendent's examination a'ready and get such a certificate you mind of, and get elected to teach the district school. And with all my hard work, I kep' her dressed as well as I otherwise could. For I was always handy with the needle and Jennie and Sadie was always

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

so fond for the clo'es. Well, when at last Jennie come home with her certificate to teach, my but we was all proud! Indeed, I wasn't more proud when Hiram got his paper that he was now a real preacher—sich a seminary preacher, mind you!—though that was a long time afterward. Well, I thought it would go easier for me, mebbby, when Jennie got her school. But you see, she had so ambitious to dress nice and do for Danny (he was such a smart little fellah) that I had still to take in washings and go out by the day to work. Hiram he worked the little farm we had and I helped him, too, in the busy seasons to save the cost of a hired man, for our place had such a heavy mortgage that the interest took near all we could scrape together. Yes, for nine years and a half we struggled along like that, and then at last John died. And mind you, the very next month after he died, we all of a suddint found coal on our land! Yes, who'd ever of looked for such an unexpected ewent as that! Ain't?"

"To whom did the land belong?" asked Margaret.

"It had belonged to my husband's first wife, but she had willed it over to him before she died. So it was hisn."

"Oh, but, my dear, then you were entitled to one third of it, if you didn't sign away your rights."

"Indeed, no, I didn't sign nothing. Leave me tell you something, my dear: John on his deathbed he thanked me for all I done and his dying orders to me was, 'Don't you never leave Jennie and the rest get you to sign away your rights in the farm that you worked so hard to keep in the family. If it wasn't for you,' he said, 'we would of been sold out of here long ago, and the children all bound

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

out and me in the poorhouse! And if I had the money for a lawyer, I'd sign the whole farm over to you before I die.' 'No, John,' I said, 'that wouldn't be right, neither, to give it to me over your children's heads.' 'Well, anyway,' he says, 'it's too late now, so you just pass me your solemn promise on my deathbed that you'll never leave 'em persuade you to sign *nothing* without you first leave one of your Mennonite brethren look it over and say you ain't signin' away your rights.' So I passed my promise and I've kep' it, though it has certainly went hard for me to keep it. Danny worried me often a'ready these thirty years back, to sign a paper, and it used to make him wonderful put out when I had to tell him, still, that I'd sign if he'd leave one of our Mennonite brethren read it first and say if I was breakin' my word to John or no. Danny always said he didn't want our affairs made so public and the Mennonite brother would have too much to say. So then I had to say I couldn't sign it; I couldn't break my word to John on his deathbed. Many's the time I was sorry I passed that promise to John—they all have so cross at me because I won't sign nothin'. You see, they always was generous to me, giving me the house and backyard to live in without rent. But to be sure I couldn't break my word to my dying man!"

Margaret saw that there had been no self-interest in her refusal to sign away her rights, but that the binding quality of a deathbed promise was to her a fetish, a superstition. And it was this, no doubt, that Catherine had meant in speaking of her "breast-plate of righteousness," her conscientious devotion to her solemn vow had shielded



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

her from the snare of the fowler; from "the greed of the vulture," Catherine had said.

"And lately," Mrs. Leitzel continued her story, "Danny didn't bother me no more to sign nothing. But to-day," she concluded, suddenly looking very weak and helpless, as she leaned far back in her chair, "to-day he ast me again, and he said it couldn't make no matter to me now when I was so near my end, and if I'd sign a paper he'd not leave the others put me to the poorhouse. But I told him if I was so soon to come before my Maker, I darsent go with a broken promise on my soul. If only I hadn't never passed that promise, my dear! John meant it in kindness to me, but you see," she suddenly sobbed, "it's sendin' me to the poorhouse to end my days!"

"Oh, but my dear!" exclaimed Margaret, her face flushed with excitement, "why didn't you, from the very first, get your one third interest in those coal lands? You were and are entitled to it!"

"Well," said Mrs. Leitzel, "right in the beginning when they first found the coal, they got me to say I'd be satisfied to take the house and backyard for my share; not to keep, of course, but to live on for the rest of my life; and seeing the land had been their own mother's, that was a lot more'n I had the right to look for. 'To be sure," she gently explained, "you couldn't expect your step-children to care for you as your own flesh and blood might."

"You cared for them as though they were your own flesh and blood. Tell me, you did *not* sign an agreement, did

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

you, to accept the house and backyard in lieu of your one third interest in the estate?"

"No, for that would of been breakin' the promise I passed to John. For you see, Danny never *would* leave one of the brethren look over the paper he wanted me to sign, and say whether I could do it without breakin' my word. So I never signed nothing."

"Then the only thing you need to establish your absolute right in one third of the income of the coal lands (now enjoyed by your step-children and excluding you) is the proof that the title to those lands was vested absolutely in your husband at the time of his death. If it wasn't, you have no case. If it was, you've plenty of money! You see, my brother-in-law is a lawyer and I've imbibed a little bit of legal knowledge. But I have an intimate friend, Miss Catherine Hamilton, who knows nearly as much law as Daniel does and I'll get her to look up the court-house records for your husband's title to that land, and *then*, my dear, if we find it—— Oh, my stars!"

"But, Margaret," the old woman protested fearfully, "you'll get 'em all down on you if you go and do somepin like *that*!"

"You see," Margaret gravely explained, "*I* am living on this money which belongs to you, and my children will be living on it, inheriting it. I couldn't bear that, of course."

"Do you mean," faltered Mrs. Leitzel, "you think they *cheated* me? There's others tried to hint that to me and I wouldn't never listen to it. Why, Hiram's a Christian minister and they're all church members and professin'

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Christians! They wouldn't *steal*, my dear—and from an old woman like me!”

“It's been done, however, by church members and professing Christians. We'll investigate it, my dear,” Margaret firmly repeated.

“But I wouldn't want to be the cause of you and Danny's fallin' out, little girl! That I certainly wouldn't. And, dear me!—if you got Jennie down on you yet!”

“She couldn't be much more down on me than she is. And during all these years, you know, *you've* stood up to them for the sake of a sacred promise. I hope I haven't less courage.”

“Don't you think Danny's too smart a lawyer, my dear, for you to get 'round him?” Mrs. Leitzel anxiously tried to avert the disaster which Margaret's suggestion surely presaged.

“My brother-in-law is a smart lawyer, too. I'll write to him this very night, put the case to him (omitting names) and ask his advice. Oh,” she suddenly lowered her voice, “here come ‘the girls.’ Do not breathe a word of what I've said to you!”

“Oh, no, indeed I won't. I know how cross they'd have at me! My dear,” she added, clinging to Margaret's hand, “stay by me, will you? Please! Jennie and Sadie won't like it so well that I come. I conceived I'd get away before they got back, and they're likely to scold me some, my dear, and——”

Margaret stooped over her impulsively and kissed her forehead. “Come out to the porch with me and see the babies.”

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

When a moment later Jennie and Sadie came into the room they saw, through the long French window opening on to the porch, their step-mother bending over the sleeping infants in the big double coach, and Margaret standing at her side, her arm about her waist.



### XXIII

**W**HY!" exclaimed Jennie as she grudgingly shook hands with her step-mother when Margaret returned with her to the sitting-room. "You *here!* We saw Danny downtown just now and he said he gave you money to get home."

"Yes," added Sadie, also shaking hands reluctantly, "we didn't look to see you here. Anyhow *Danny* thought you went to the depot from his office."

"But," smiled Margaret, "she gave me the pleasant surprise of a call. I am so glad, because I wanted so much to know her, my husband's mother and the babies' grandmother! How pretty your flowers look, Sadie!" she added diplomatically and quite insincerely, for she groaned inwardly at the bunch of little artificial roses Sadie girlishly wore on the lapel of her coat.

"What is *this* to do?" Jennie suddenly demanded as her eyes fell upon the tea-table.

"We've been having tea and toast."

"Well!" breathed Sadie.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Jennie. "You stopped Emmy in her Sa'urday's work to make tea and toast in the middle of the afternoon yet!"

"It took her just fifteen minutes."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"She ain't ever to be hindered in her Sa'urday's work! She has a cake to bake for Sunday then!"

"But you know," said Margaret patiently, "you stopped her on wash day to make tea for Mrs. Ocksreider."

"Well, but Mom ain't used to tea in the afternoon and Mrs. Ocksreider is. Anyhow, who's keeping house here, Margaret?"

"But surely I may have a cup of tea with your mother if I wish to, in this house!"

"But it up-mixes my accounts when you do somepin like this. Danny pays half of all the expenses here and Sadie and I pay half."

"Oh, I see," Margaret breathed rather than spoke. "But after all, Jennie, it's quite a simple matter—charge the tea, sugar, milk, bread, and butter to Daniel's side of your account and I'll take the responsibility of it."

Jennie turned abruptly to her step-mother. "It's getting late on you, Mom, to get out home. You don't want to get there after dark, with a half a mile to walk from the station yet. Before I take off my coat and hat, I better see you on the street car that'll take you to the depot for the five o'clock train."

"Yes, Jennie," the old woman submissively answered, "I was just a-goin' to start to go when you come."

She rose with an effort from the comfortable chair before the fire in which Margaret had again placed her. But Margaret at once pressed her back into her seat.

"You will be glad to know, Jennie, that I have persuaded mother to spend the night with us," she said, "as



“You will be glad to know, Jennie, that I have persuaded mother to spend the night with us,” Margaret said





## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

she is too tired from her journey to go back before to-morrow."

"She never stops the night with us, Margaret," Jennie coldly returned. "Come on, Mom, I'll put you on the street car."

"But isn't it nice," cried Margaret, holding her arm around Mrs. Leitzel to keep Jennie off, "that I've succeeded in *coaxing* her to stay to-night? Such a pleasant surprise for Daniel when he comes home, to find you here, dear! What is home without a grandmother? Good discipline for Daniel, too, to have to give up this armchair for one evening! Even I have to get out of it when he wants it. But naturally he can't put his *mother* out of the only really comfortable chair in the house."

"But Danny paid for that chair," explained Sadie. "It would be funny—ain't?—if he couldn't sit in his own chair when he wants!"

"The spare-room bed ain't made up," Jennie frowned at Margaret. "And nobody has time to make it up at four o'clock on Saturday afternoon! Anyhow, strangers stopping over night is apt to give Sadie the headache. And Mom never *wants* to be away from her own bed. She won't can home herself in a strange bed, can you, Mom?"

But Margaret spoke before Mrs. Leitzel could reply. "I'll make up the guest bed. It won't take me ten minutes. Mother"—she patted Mrs. Leitzel's shoulder—"I'll be right downstairs again in ten minutes."

But Mrs. Leitzel clung to her hand. "Don't let me alone with—stay by me, Margaret——" she pitifully pleaded.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"You shall come upstairs with me, then, to my room," Margaret said, helping her, now, to rise to her feet.

"No, Margaret, Mom's to go back on the five o'clock train," affirmed Jennie peremptorily. "Our Danny give her the money *to* go back. It ain't for *you* to be using our clean linens to make up the spare bed. Come on, Mom."

Jennie laid an ungentle grasp upon her step-mother's arm, but Margaret, her face suddenly ablaze with indignation, confronted her.

"Jennie! This is my husband's home, and his feeble mother shall be his guest and mine until to-morrow morning."

"She ain't his mother, she ain't even a blood relation. And what right have *you*, I'd like to know, to meddle in our family affairs?" Jennie fiercely demanded. "It's just your *contrariness* that makes you want to do everything that you see will spite us; for what other reason would a person like you have for taking up with an uneducated old woman like Mom? You wouldn't *look* at a person like her if it was not to spite us!"

"What right have I? The right of the humane to protect the helpless from brutality, under any and all circumstances, without exception. She shall not leave this house to-day!"

"Now, Mom," Sadie turned on her step-mother, "you see what you make by coming here like this, without leaving us know! Ain't you worrying us enough all the time, without raising more trouble between us and Danny's wife yet?"

"Yes, yes, I'll go. Please, my dear"—she turned to

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Margaret,—“leave me go. I'd rather die on the way home than stay and make it unhappy for you, Margaret! Danny will take up for them, you know, so I can't stay and make trouble. Leave me go, my dear!”

“But if you don't make your mother welcome here,” Margaret addressed both Jennie and Sadie, “I shall have to go with her. I can take her to Catherine Hamilton's for the night. Or,” she added with sudden inspiration, “to Mrs. Ocksreider's, and ask *her* if she won't give her a bed until the morning. She shall not take that journey to-night!”

Jennie glared in baffled fury, while Sadie turned white with dismay.

“Danny won't leave you do such an outrageous thing!” the elder sister said hoarsely.

“Daniel can't stop me. Come, mother.”

“You don't mean to say you'd do as mean a thing as that—take *Mom* to *Mrs. Ocksreider's*!”

“But I am so sure that Mrs. Ocksreider is the very person who would be very glad to receive her for the night.”

“You up and tell me to my face you'd disgrace us like that!”

“But where would the disgrace come in?” asked Margaret innocently.

“Where would the *disgrace* come in?” repeated Jennie hotly. “*Don't* you see any disgrace in telling Mrs. Ocksreider that we won't leave our mother (even if she is our step-mother) sleep at our place over night?”

“Then you admit that you *are* acting disgracefully in turning her out?”

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"You wait till Danny comes home and he'll show you if you can go against me like this in his house!" Jennie violently threatened, more furious than ever at being trapped by her own words. "Now you leave Mom be till I take her out to the car!"

"No, Jennie, if she goes I go with her—to our friend, Mrs. Ocksreider. Therefore, it behooves you——"

But it was just at this instant that the sitting-room door opened and Daniel walked into their midst.

"Margaret! I've got an automobile at the door. Get your hat——"

He stopped short in astonishment at sight of his step-mother, at Margaret's attitude of shielding her against the evidently furious antagonism of Jennie and the cold disapproval of Sadie.

"Well?" he demanded testily. "What's up? How did you get up *here*, mother?"

"Yes, how did she, when you gave her the money to go home yet?" scolded Sadie.

Margaret, leaving the statement of the situation to Jennie, remained silent.

"Who brought you up here?" Daniel inquired of the old woman.

"I come by myself, Danny. I wanted to see your wife and the twinses, and I conceited I'd be gone before the girls got home. But I'll go right aways now. I'm sorry I come. I didn't *want* to make no trouble—I——"

She made a movement from Margaret's side, but the latter clasped her firmly.

"Margaret," commanded Daniel, "let her go."



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"I have invited her to spend the night here, Daniel. She is not able to go home to-night."

"I'll take care of that—this is not your affair. Let her alone! Take your hands off her!"

"Will you let her spend the night here?"

"I said I would take care of that. Take your hands off her."

Margaret obeyed.

"Now come here, mother."

Mrs. Leitzel walked feebly toward him, but Margaret walked beside her.

"Now, you see, Danny, how *contrary* she acts!" Jennie broke forth. "I wanted to take Mom out to the trolley car and Margaret would not leave her come along, when Mom said she *wanted* to come, too!"

"Well, *I'm* here now," returned Daniel grimly. "I'll take you to the station, mother," he pronounced conclusively, taking the old woman's arm.

"Daniel! Your mother can't go home alone this evening! It will be cruel of you to send her!"

Daniel, ignoring her, led his mother to the hall.

"I tell you I'm going to stop this cruelty!" cried Margaret, darting upstairs to get her wraps.

She was down again almost immediately, her coat over her arm, but when she reached the sidewalk the automobile containing her husband and his mother was beyond her reach.

"I may be able to get to the station before that five o'clock train!" she thought, starting almost on a run to go the length of the town to the depot, putting on her coat

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

and gloves as she went. "I believe his mother will die on the way if she goes, and has to walk that half-mile alone in the dark, after being subjected to all this horrible scene! Oh, my God! What people they are!"

She realized, on her way, that her purse was empty, her monthly allowance having been spent, and that she had not even money for trolley car fares—a serious handicap in her efforts to help Mrs. Leitzel.

When, panting for breath, a sharp pain in her side, she reached the station, the train to Martz was just pulling out.

Daniel, smiling blandly, came toward her along the platform.

"God help me!" was the cry of her heart, "that I cannot even hate him—he is too utterly pitiable! If I could hate him, there might be some hope for us!"

"Want to take a little ride, my dear?" he inquired, waving his hand to the waiting automobile.

"Take me home," she returned weakly, feeling suddenly collapsed and helpless.

"You know," he said as he helped her into the car, "you ought not to excite yourself like this—it's bad for Daniel Junior's milk—about something, too, that is no concern of yours. And I want to warn you also," he added, lowering his voice so that the chauffeur might not hear him, as the car turned into the street, "that you've *got* to refrain from offending Jennie and Sadie so constantly. They have a *lot* of money to leave to our children. Keep on offending them as you are doing and they'll will all they have to Hiram's children!" said Daniel in a tone that expressed all the horror that such a possibility contained for him.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Margaret did not reply.

"You get me?" Daniel inquired.

"Considerations like that, Daniel, have never entered into my philosophy of life, thank God!"

"Margaret, you really must break yourself of this dreadful habit of swearing! It's so unladylike! And so unchristian!"

"Oh, my good Lord, Daniel! Don't dare to talk to me about anything's being 'unchristian,' when you have just done a cruel, *cruel* thing to your aged, helpless mother! I don't profess and loudly flaunt *my* 'Christian principles,' but I do believe in the Golden Rule. Evidently you don't. Don't *speak* to me!"

"Hoity-toity! Cut out these tantrums, Margaret; they're bad for the boy, you know."

"Why don't you tell the Y. W. C. A. about your smart 'deal' with your tenant, George Trout, and your treatment of your step-mother? Maybe they'd send you another congratulatory letter that you could have published in the *Intelligencer*."

"You heed my warning about offending Jennie and Sadie," was Daniel's reply.

"At the time of your father's death was the title of the farm at Martz vested absolutely in him?"

Margaret had the satisfaction of seeing Daniel start and turn red at her question, as he turned abruptly and looked at her.

"What makes you ask that?" he nervously demanded.

"Was it?" she repeated.

"Why do you wish to know?"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"It was," she affirmed.

"*How* do you know?" he sharply questioned.

"That same old Woman's Intuition."

"I insist on your answering me intelligibly! What do you know of business matters like that *anyhow*?"

"Not much, but a little."

"Understand, Margaret, once and for all, that my business affairs and that of my folks are no least concern of yours!"

"*Yours* are."

"They are not!"

"Oh, yes, they are, Daniel. You and I are life partners and I am the mother of your heirs. Therefore, I have *everything* to do with your business. Neither I nor my children shall live on stolen money."

"Stolen money! You talk to *me* of 'stolen money,' when I stand in this community as the one honest, upright, Christian lawyer! Gracious, Margaret, I certainly expected that after the children were born I'd have back again the sweet girl I married! I'm beginning to feel that I've been awfully taken in!"

Margaret leaned back in the automobile, closed her eyes, and did not answer. During the remainder of the ride the silence between them was unbroken.



## XXIV

**I**MMEDIATELY after dinner Margaret went to her room, got into a negligé, and sitting down to her writing-desk, began a letter to Walter.

She stated the case of the Leitzel coal lands under the guise of Western gold mines and asked her brother-in-law to give her all possible light on the legality of the case for the benefit of the "grandmother."

"If the laws governing such a case differ greatly in the different states," she wrote, "please give me all the *general* information on the subject that you can. This is a very important matter to me, Walter, though I can't tell you *why*; nor can I explain to you why I consult you rather than Daniel on a question of law. The fact is, I am preparing a little surprise for Daniel."

At this point in her letter she paused, resting her elbow on her desk and her head on her hand. "Walter will see right through my disguises and subterfuges," she reflected. "He will understand *perfectly* what the surprise is that I am preparing for Daniel. And in his reply he will undoubtedly tell me what the law of *Pennsylvania* is governing such a case as I've outlined. Well," she drearily sighed, "I can't help it if he does see through it, I can't be a party to defrauding that old woman, as I *would* be if I consented to live here on money that ought to be hers."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

She took up her pen again and dipped it into her ink, but the bedroom door opened and Daniel entered.

She looked so pretty in the dainty pink negligé which she wore, and with her abundant dark hair hanging in two heavy braids down her back, that Daniel, despite the coldness which had prevailed at dinner, came to her side, put his bony arm about her shoulders and patted her bare arm.

"Writing to Walter, I see," he remarked; and quickly she covered her letter with a blotter.

"Yes," she answered.

"Glad you are. I've not *yet* got an answer out of him. Are you, my dear, repenting of your unwifely behaviour and writing to him what I want you to?"

"I'm doing what I consider my wifely duty, yes."

"Good! I knew I'd get my sweet girl back again! Let me see what you've written. All this!" he exclaimed, reaching across the desk to pick up her letter; but Margaret, looking at him in startled amazement, held him off.

"I haven't said you could read my letter, Daniel."

"Do you have secrets from me, Margaret?"

"Do you have any from me, Daniel?"

"That's neither here nor there. Come, let me see your letter, my dear!"

"I don't wish to. Why do you want to?"

"You are writing something to your brother-in-law you don't want me to know about?" he accused her, his narrow gaze piercing her.

Margaret quickly decided to resort to guile.

"Daniel," she smiled upon him, "I'm preparing a little surprise for you."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"A surprise?" he repeated suspiciously.

"Yes. Now, while I am finishing my letter, I want you to do something for me. Will you?"

"What?"

"Is there any way of finding out by telephone or telegraph," she asked, her eyes big and sad, her lips drooping, "whether your poor mother is by this time safe at home? I shan't sleep a wink to-night from worrying over that half-mile walk she had to take after dark!"

"She didn't have to take the half-mile walk. I arranged for that. I gave her a quarter to pay for a 'bus ride from the station to her house and I 'phoned to Abe Schwenck to meet her train with the 'bus. Could I have done *more*?"

"You really did all that?" she asked, her face lighting up with relief.

"I did all that. So you see I'm not 'cruel' and hard-hearted. I did all that for one who is no relation to me and has no claim on me."

"The claim of gratitude?" Margaret suggested; "or of mere humanity?"

"As for gratitude, haven't we repaid her for her ten years' service for us by our thirty years of taking care of her?"

"Taking care of her?"

"We've never charged her a cent of rent for the only home she has had for thirty years."

"*Why* wouldn't you let her stay here to-night?"

"Because we don't want to start that kind of thing, or she'd be here on our hands *all* the time. Once we take

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

her in, we'll never be able to shake her off, and we don't want her."

"I see."

"Of course you see. Now give me a kiss, and promise me you will turn over a new leaf and not be so stubborn about the care of the babies and about Catherine Hamilton and about all the other little matters in which you tease me so that I've got indigestion!" he said fretfully.

"I act only as I must, Daniel," said Margaret sadly. "It gives me worse than indigestion!"

"Look at Hiram's Lizzie! *She* never antagonizes the girls the way you do!" he complained, genuine anxiety in his voice.

"She doesn't live with them."

"Well, but don't you see that's where we have the advantage over Hiram? They'll get more attached to our children because they'll see more of them. If you acted toward my sisters as you should, as your duty to me and to your children requires that you should, they might leave nearly all they have to our children, giving Hiram's children merely small bequests."

"If I should let them have their way with our babies, they certainly would leave all their money to Hiram's children, for there wouldn't *be* any babies in this house. They'd kill them off with slow torture."

"Hiram's children haven't died and Lizzie does with them as Jennie and Sadie have always advised her to do."

"Exceptions to every rule," Margaret briefly replied, perfectly willing to shield Lizzie.

"Well," said Daniel emphatically, "you keep up your



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

present injudicious course, and the day will come when your children themselves will reproach you for having deprived them, by your sheer perversity, of what was justly their due."

"I hope to bring them up too well for that."

"And I hope to bring them up to have a little more judgment about money than you have, my dear! Well, I should say so! or they would be ill-prepared to take care of all they will inherit!"

"They will inherit a great deal, will they?" Margaret casually inquired.

"Enough to need some common sense in the management of it."

"Couldn't you spare a little from what they'll inherit to keep that dear old step-mother of yours for her remaining years?"

"Margaret!" said Daniel curtly, "I tell you again I want no interference from you in my family affairs!"

"Well, then, can you, or can you not, *afford* to give me more than ten dollars a month for pocket money? I find it embarrassing to be out of money so often as I am. It is my right to know what you can afford to let me have."

"If you would keep an account and submit it to me, I could judge better of the justice of your request for more. Ten dollars a month seems to me considerable money for a woman to spend on *nothing*, for you are not expected to buy your clothing and food with your allowance!"

Margaret, toying with her pen, her eyes downcast, did not answer.

"If I did increase your allowance, it would be just like

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

you to pass it on to my step-mother! Positively, I believe that's what you do want to do with it!"

"You are giving me credit I don't deserve. I was asking for the money for myself. I am so often embarrassed for lack of money. I had to borrow a dollar from Catherine Hamilton yesterday to pay Mrs. Raub for washing my hair. Catherine said she'd collect it from you."

"Jennie and Sadie wash their own heads."

"My hair is so thick I can't dry it myself and, you know, it would be bad for the baby's food if I took cold."

"Adopt the rule which helped to make my success, Margaret: never let yourself get entirely out of money. And, my dear, if you'd do what I ask you to—give me power of attorney—you'd have a little income of your very own. Why, don't you feel under some obligation to do something for me, in return for all I do for you?"

"Have I done nothing for you? I have given you a son and a daughter. Can anything you ever have or ever will do for me cover *that* debt?"

"Well," Daniel smiled, patting her neck, "you did pretty well by me in that instance, I must admit; and I promise you this: when you can persuade Walter Eastman to do what's fair by you as to Berkeley Hill, I will increase your allowance."

Margaret lifted her eyes, grave and melancholy, to Daniel's face bent smilingly above her. "Catherine Hamilton mentioned yesterday, Daniel, when I was obliged to borrow a dollar from her, that she felt safe in lending it to me as you were a millionaire and your income was twenty

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

times (or fifty, I forget her figures) more than you spent."

"She has no business discussing my finances!"

"She didn't discuss them. She quite casually dropped the remark (which I confess I found rather startling in view of some things) that you were a millionaire and could not begin to spend even a small part of your enormous income. Yet you let your old step-mother suffer and subject me to the embarrassment of borrowing money to pay a hairdresser!"

"It's your own bad management that obliges you to borrow at any time," Daniel coolly returned, not at all disturbed. "And your constant disregard of my wishes, my dear, would justify my cutting off your allowance altogether! But I don't do it, do I? As for Miss Hamilton, she's not the excellent clerk I took her for! She has no sort of business to discuss my income and my expenditures."

"I envy her!" Margaret suddenly cried out passionately. "She is at least independent, self-supporting, not a miserable parasite! I wish I were in her place, working honestly for wages that you would have to pay me, instead of being in the degrading position of having to ask you for money which you refuse me! I'd better have gone and worked in a factory than have done what I did!"

Her face fell on her arms and wild sobs shook her.

"Margaret!" Daniel cried in alarm and distress, his arm about her. "My dear! You'll injure yourself and Daniel Junior, if you do so! *Stop* going on so! Oh!" he exclaimed, "you've waked the babies with your noise!"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

A little cry from the adjoining nursery brought Margaret to her feet. Daniel, infatuated quite humanly with his beautiful babies, followed her eagerly, as, forgetful instantly of her own troubles, she went to minister to her children.



## XXV

**I**N REPLY to her letter to her brother-in-law, Margaret received from him, a week later, a telegram that puzzled her greatly.

*Charleston, S. C.*

Important Berkeley estate business brings me to New Munich Thursday, February tenth.

WALTER.

She had ten days before his coming to anticipate with some uneasiness the shock he would certainly get in making the acquaintance of her husband's sisters and in seeing the kind of home she lived in.

"If only I could dispose of that navy blue owl on the sideboard!" she worried. "And of all that imitation onyx in the parlour! And the 'oil-paintings' in the sitting-room! As for Jennie and Sadie themselves—— Oh, what can Walter be coming here for? I don't suppose they've discovered coal on *our* estate. I hope not, such a dirty mess as it would make! More like *our* luck to discover we don't, after all, own the place."

But she found, when she announced her brother-in-law's prospective visit, that she herself had not yet got all the shocks and surprises the Leitzels were capable of affording her. Her Southern sentiment of hospitality

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

received another unexpected blow in discovering that Jennie and Sadie quite seriously objected to entertaining her brother-in-law at their home.

"We ain't used to comp'ny stopping here," Jennie explained to her. "Danny's business acquaintances always go to the *hotel*. It wouldn't suit me just so well. We ain't so young as we used to be, and it would certainly be a worry to me to have company stopping here. You'd best not begin that kind of thing, Margaret. If your brother-in-law slep' and eat here, it would mebbly give our Sadie the headache."

That New Munich hospitality, instead of being a condition of daily life as with Southerners, was so specialized an occasion as to cause the upsetting of a household and the expenditure of the nervous energy of a whole family, Margaret had come to recognize. People did not "keep open house"; they "entertained." But how was she to spring such a thing upon Walter, who knew no other standard of hospitality than that of the open Southern home? How explain to him upon his arrival that her home and her husband's was not open to him, and that he must stop at a hotel?

She had not at all solved the problem when in a wholly unlooked-for way it was solved for her. Confined to bed one day with a violent headache, and quite helpless to protect her babies from Jennie's hygienic theories, the twins were kept by their aunt in a hot, airtight room such as Jennie considered their proper environment, with the result that they cried all day; and the next day had heavy colds—their first disorder of any kind since their

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

birth. But when Margaret, herself recovered, insisted upon taking them, suffering from influenza as they were, out into the chill air of a cold day in January, Jennie's thwarted will, thwarted affection, and wild anxiety for these babies of Danny's whom she loved almost fiercely, broke all bounds, and she gave Margaret her ultimatum.

"Or either you keep those children in the house till they're well already, or either I and Sadie *leave* this house where we have to look on at such croolities, and go to keep house by ourselves! Yes, this very day we go!"

Margaret paused in the strenuous work of getting little Daniel's arms into his coat sleeves, preparatory to his outing, and gazed up at Jennie with such a light of joyful hope in her eyes that Jennie, had she not been too blindly furious to see it, would certainly have withdrawn this proffered happiness from her now heartily detested sister-in-law.

"If Danny wasn't in Philadelphia to-day, I'd 'phone to his office and have him *make* you keep them in!" she raged frantically. "They'll get pneumonia, so they will!"

"Daniel couldn't make me, Jennie. I act under the doctor's orders. Daniel's a lawyer, not a physician. I'm taking the babies out to *save* them from having pneumonia."

"Daniel couldn't make you, couldn't he? Well, *I* can! Yes, and I mean what I say! You take these babies out on a day like this when they're sick, and I and Sadie *move out this very day!*" she harshly reiterated, under the delusion that Margaret would never put her to the test:

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

for not only was Jennie incapable of realizing Margaret's utter indifference to the economic advantage of their joint housekeeping, but it also seemed to her wholly incredible that her sister-in-law could subject her devoted and indulgent husband to the suffering he would certainly undergo if deprived of his sisters' constant ministrations to his comforts.

"And when Danny comes home from Philadelphia to-night and finds us *gone* and our half of the furniture being moved out, what do you think he'll say to *you* for driving us out?"

Margaret, realizing that she must conceal the heaven opened up by this unexpected ultimatum, quickly cast down her eyes, that her tormentor might not see her quivering eagerness.

"I'll *goad* her to moving out!" she desperately resolved. "Oh! if only I can make it impossible for her to back down from her threat."

She suddenly raised her eyes again and laughed sarcastically. "Oh, you can't scare me with your threats! *You'll* not go!"

"You'll see whether we won't! You just dare to take those sick children outside this house, and you won't find I and Sadie here when you come home!"

"That won't worry me. You'll be back soon enough. Catch *you* leaving your brother's house! Oh, no, my dear, you don't fool me for one minute. Why, where on earth would you go?"

"Maybe you don't know," put in Sadie triumphantly, "that Jennie and me *own* the nice empty house at the



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

corner that the tenants moved out of because we wouldn't repaper!"

"Yes," exclaimed Jennie, "we own it and it's empty; and it's all been cleaned only last week a'ready. So then you *see* if we couldn't move out of here perfectly convenient!"

Margaret's hopes rose higher, while at the same time she suffered fearful misgivings lest by any inadvertency on her part they be dashed.

"Ha!" she laughed derisively and most artificially. "You'd never move in there and lose the rent of that house! You can't fool me! *I'm* not scared. Come, baby dear, other little arm now!" she said, tugging at Daniel Junior's coat. "*Fancy* your moving out! Ha!"

Her utterly unnatural tone of taunting sarcasm ought not to have deceived even so slow a mind as Jennie Leitzel's, but the woman's rage dulled what penetration she ordinarily had and she was completely misled.

"I'm not *trying* to fool you!" she almost screamed. "I tell you that sure as you go out the door with those two twins, my brother, when he comes home this evening, will find us and our furniture *gone*, never to come back! I'll prove it to you, I'll *prove* it! And we'll take Emmy along, and there'll be no dinner *for* my poor brother when he comes home!"

"Oh, yes, there will," Margaret laughed quite sardonically. "There will be dinner and there will be two dear, devoted sisters. If you do take your departure, you'll be *back* soon enough!" Her unnatural tones kept it up, every phrase carefully calculated to force the consum-

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

mation she so devoutly wished, though inwardly her very soul was sick at the part she played; for deep down in her heart there was an undercurrent of pity for these poor creatures so limited in their capacity for happiness and yet capable of fiercely loving the babies so dear to them all and the brother they had cherished from babyhood.

"You'll *see*, then, if we'll come back again!" Jennie hoarsely harked back at her. "Yes, you'll see! And you'll see what Danny'll——"

Margaret having tucked the babies warmly into their coach, laughed again devilishly as she wheeled them out to the porch.

"*You'll* be back! Bye-bye until I *see* you again!" And with a peal of mocking laughter, so cleverly melodramatic that she marvelled at her own hitherto unsuspected histrionic talent, she disappeared.

And so it transpired that the marriage of Daniel Leitzel afforded one more sensation to New Munich's not yet surfeited taste for gossip concerning their notable townsman; for when Daniel got home that evening at seven o'clock he found a dismantled and disordered house, no dinner, no cook, no sisters; only two sweetly sleeping babies in the nursery and a wife with a face uplifted with a new-born happiness and peace. So deep was the serenity that had settled upon her and upon the servantless, dismantled, and disordered household, that Daniel's rage and grief, his bitter reproaches, his lamentations over the extra expense his home would now be to him passed over her head as though it were nothing more than the somewhat irritating cackle of an old hen.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Daniel, after a call on his sisters at their new home down at the corner and a long and painful interview with them, in which they affirmed that unless he exercised his marital and scriptural authority to make Margaret apologize and promise that in the future she would treat them and their wishes with the consideration which was their due, they would not return to his house, though from this close proximity to him they could and would continue to see after his comforts—after this most unsatisfactory and upsetting conversation with his sisters, Daniel went to his bed very late that night, feeling, for the first time in his life, that he was abused of Fate; but Margaret lay awake long, revelling ecstatically in the realization that now at last she had a home of her very own; two lovely babies on whom she could expend the pent-up riches of her heart and in whom her own highest ideals might perhaps be wrought out; a friend who deeply shared her life and whom now she could freely bring into the sanctum of her own home. Oh, life was full and rich! She was young, she was strong, she was happy.

The husband asleep at her side was a negligible quantity in her estimate of her blessings; he was a responsibility she had incurred and to which she certainly meant to be faithful. It was not in his power to make her very unhappy.

But Margaret was, in fact, rejoicing a little too soon. Jennie and Sadie had gone out from her home, but they had not yet gone out of her life, as she was to realize later.

Daniel's anger was not modified when, next morning, he was obliged, for the first time in his life, to get up and

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

attend to the furnace and the kitchen range. Margaret judiciously repressed her amusement at his plight.

"Oh, well, dear, you are not the only one. It's the first time in my life I ever had to get up and get breakfast," she offered what seemed to him most irrelevant consolation.

"Marriage," she reflected philosophically when, without kissing her good-bye, he left her to go to his office, "must be an adjusting of one's self to, and acceptance of, the inevitable, Daniel being the Inevitable!"

She decided, as she called up the Employment Office, that she needed three servants, but she did not have the temerity to engage more than one. For here was a point at which Daniel held the whip-hand: he could refuse to pay the wages of those he considered superfluous, and she had no money of her own.

"As Jennie and Sadie paid half of Emmy's wages," she reflected, "it will go hard with Daniel to have to pay the maid entirely himself. Anyway," she rejoiced, "I shan't now have to send Walter to a hotel."



## XXVI

MARGARET bent all her energies to readjusting the household—*her* household now—in preparation for Walter's visit, to which she could, under these changed conditions, look forward with eager pleasure. But here again she ran upon a snag.

"Every cloud has a silver lining," Daniel sentimentally remarked, preparatory to the discussion of the new furniture necessary to replace what his sisters had removed. "You can now have your own things sent up from the Berkeley Hill home. Half of all that old mahogany, silver, rugs, books, and pictures. I couldn't afford to *buy* such valuable furniture as you've got there. And solid silver, too."

"Strip Berkeley Hill, my sister's home! and bring those things into this house!" Margaret almost gasped. "But don't you see, Daniel, this isn't the sort of house for old colonial furniture? It would be incongruous. What this house needs is early Victorian."

"The freightage on your things won't come to nearly so much as new furniture would cost, even though we bought the grade of stuff the girls had here. And you can tell your sister Harriet that *I'll* pay for the crating and packing. It isn't right that I should, for they've had the use of your things all this time, but you can tell her I'm

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

perfectly willing to do that. Or, never mind writing to her; we can arrange it with Walter when he comes."

So strong was Margaret's sentiment for Berkeley Hill that it would have hurt her as much to see its familiar furnishings in this alien setting in New Munich as it would have hurt Harriet to strip her home. She did not, however, pursue the discussion with Daniel. Walter would be privately informed as to her wishes in the matter; and the places left bare by Jennie's and Sadie's departure would remain bare until Daniel saw fit to buy furniture to fill them.

Meantime, she managed, though with difficulty, to prepare, with what furniture she had, a comfortable room for her brother-in-law.

"If Daniel were poor, I'd feel I *ought* to help him out, painful as it would be to me to see any part of Berkeley Hill installed here. But he doesn't need to be helped out. Far from it!"

Daniel assumed Walter's visit to mean that at last this slow-moving Southerner had got round to the point of noticing his insistent demands for a settlement of Margaret's share in Berkeley Hill. So he awaited his arrival with much complacency.

Walter Eastman reached New Munich at ten o'clock one Wednesday morning and Margaret met him at the station. By the time Daniel came home to luncheon at one o'clock the "important Berkeley Hill business" of which Walter had telegraphed was entirely concluded between him and Margaret, as were also a few other items of importance.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"For the present, Walter, I prefer not to tell Daniel about this news you have brought me," she suggested at the end of their interview, which, by the way, found her rather white and agitated.

"But of course you understand, my dear," returned Walter, "that you can't keep him in ignorance of it long?"

"Of course not. Just a few days. Perhaps not so long."

"Any special reason for deferring such a pleasant announcement?"

"I want to spring it on him as a palliative, a sort of compensation, for something else which won't prove so pleasant."

"Ah, by the way," said Walter with apparent irrelevancy, crossing his long legs as they sat together on a sofa of the now very bare sitting-room, "what was the meaning, Margaret, of all that bluff you put up on me about Western gold mines owned by a friend of yours who thought perhaps his step-mother had a legal claim, and so forth. Quite a case you made out!"

"It's a true case. I'm much interested in it. And Daniel's clerk happened to know that the land *was* vested in the step-mother's husband at the time of his death and that he died without a will. What I want you to tell me now is this: can any power on earth keep that widow from her one third interest in those coal—gold mines, if she claim her share?"

"No, if she has never signed away her rights."

"She hasn't done that."

"You say your husband's clerk was working on the case? Then it's the case of a client of his?"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Yes, the case of a client of his."

"And a friend of yours, you said?"

"Yes. His clerk wasn't exactly working on it; she simply told me, when I asked her, that she knew the mining land to have been vested absolutely in the husband."

"And you wrote me that the step-mother has not had her share because she's too ignorant to claim it, and that she's in want. That right?"

"Yes."

"I should say, then, no mercy should be shown those who have defrauded her. They should be made to pay up, especially as it was this old woman's hard labour and self-sacrifice in the first place (so you wrote) that saved the home and land for the family."

"Tell me, Walter, dear, *how* shall the old woman set about getting her dues?"

"Simply hire a lawyer to bring suit."

"But her religion forbids her to go to law."

"Then you're stumped. Nothing to be done."

"But I've learned that sometimes the New Mennonites allow some one else to bring suit *for* them."

"Aha!" laughed Walter. "All right. Let her have her lawyer bring suit for her."

"Can he surely recover her share?"

"Surely, if all the facts you've given me are correct, her share can be reclaimed without a struggle."

"I'm certain that all the facts I've given you are correct."

"You seem to be certain of a good deal about these far-distant acquaintances of whom I never heard, Margaret."



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Margaret cast down her eyes, her face flushing; but after an instant: "Thank you, Walter," she said. "I'm very much indebted to you. One more favour: kindly refrain from mentioning this case of the silver mines to Daniel."

"'Silver' mines?"

"Gold mines. Ah, here he comes now! And not a word, remember, of the news you've brought me!"

"All right, my dear."

"And as for the furnishings of Berkeley Hill; sit tight and don't argue. Daniel always comes round to my way in the end, but it takes a bit of time and diplomacy."

"Poor Daniel, he's like the rest of us, henpecked lot that we are!" Walter teased her. "He comes round to your way because he's got to; no escape! But if I know your Pennsylvania Dutch Daniel, Margaret, and his letters to me have been very self-revealing, he wishes sometimes that the good old wife-beating days were with us yet!"

"No, Daniel isn't like that; he isn't a bit *brutal*—at least in the sense of rough. He's very gentle, really."

Daniel, now knowing his brother-in-law to be an impecunious and, by Leitzel standards, rather an incapable, unimportant sort of a man, manifested in his curt greeting of him the small esteem he felt for him.

But he found, during his noon hour of respite, that his repeated efforts to talk business with this discounted individual were very skilfully parried.

"We have a pretty big bill, Eastman, against that South Carolina estate," he began over his soup. "A whole year's rent, you know, for Margaret's half of the

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

house, land, and furniture. But Margaret is willing to waive that, in fact, *quite* willing, and I concur in her willingness. We shan't press that. We'll let that go, especially now that you've come to settle up. If you'd waited much longer, we might not have been so willing to waive the year's rent. Eh, Margaret?"

"*Please, Daniel!*" Margaret murmured, hot with shame as she saw Walter's crimson embarrassment and rising anger.

"Well, of course, I don't mean," said Daniel, who considered himself a remarkably tactful man, "that Margaret would have gone so far as to bring suit. Not against her own sister, certainly. Nor would *I*, either, sanction such an extreme measure. But right is right, you know, and law is law."

"I've got a case on my hands," retorted Walter, avoiding Margaret's eye, "of a widow who for over thirty years has received no rent for her third share of some mines—oh, silver mines."

"You ought to draw a big fee for a case like that!" exclaimed Daniel, his eyes gleaming. "A regular big haul; enough to set you up for life! Silver mines! Well, I should say!"

"I don't expect to get much out of it."

"You'll never get much out of anything," grumbled Daniel, "the way *you* do business!"

"Sometimes, however, business men are so extremely devoted to their own interests, to the exclusion of all human appeal and all natural ties, that their 'vaulting ambition o'erleaps itself.'"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Ah, Shakespeare!" nodded Daniel. "Very aptly quoted. Yes, but the prudent, astute business man looks ahead and on all sides before he 'vaults.' I've never taken one hasty, ill-considered step in my life. And look at the result! I've a—a very comfortable living," he concluded, with a furtive glance at his wife.

"The modern rule for getting rich," Walter, having quite recovered his equanimity, casually remarked, "seems to be to skin other people."

"Ah, but you go about it too clumsily, my friend!" returned Daniel, grinning. "Don't try to skin people who have all the law and, I may say, all the brains on their side!"

Walter stared. "*I try to skin people!*"

"Well, it wouldn't be very civil of me, would it, when you are my guest at my own table, to accuse you of trying to skin my wife and me of her half of Berkeley Hill? I hope I am a man of too much tact to commit a breach of hospitality and etiquette like that! But this I will say——"

Margaret, however, seeing her husband to-day with Walter's eyes, was so swept with shame that she could not endure it. "Daniel!" she interposed, fearing that Walter, with Southern heat, would rise and slay her husband, "do let me enjoy Walter for one day without bothering about business, won't you? Wait until to-night to talk things out."

"As I'm obliged to get back to the office by two o'clock, I suppose I shall have to wait until this evening. But I've already waited over a year!" said Daniel, glancing

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

at Walter to note the embarrassment he expected his brother-in-law to feel at this thrust.

But Walter was, by this time, beyond feeling anything but wonder and amusement at Leitzel's conversation, with, also, a sense of consternation at his fresh realization of poor Margaret's fate in being saddled to a "mate" like this, who, apparently, let her have none of the compensations which his huge wealth might have afforded her.

"But you know," he trivially replied to Daniel's thrust, "'all things come to him who waits.' You waited pretty long for a wife, didn't you, Mr. Leitzel, and now you've *got* one—very much so!—a hotheaded little Southerner, with ideals of chivalry and honour and honesty which I fear must make your hair stand up sometimes, you bloated capitalist! Yes, in these days, when a man marries, he finds himself very *much* married, eh, Leitzel?" he inquired with a lightness which Daniel thought extremely unbecoming under the circumstances.

"Well," he retorted irritably, "I'll admit that sometimes I do think I'm a little too much married!"

"I'm afraid we've lost the art of keeping them within their 'true sphere'; they've got rather beyond us in these days, haven't they?"

"They're not nearly so womanly as they used to be!" said Daniel sullenly.

"But what are we going to do about it, poor shrimps that we are? Suppose, for instance, that a man's wife has a quixotic idea of honour, eccentric scruples about using money she thinks was not come by in quite an ideal



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

way, what's a corporation lawyer going to *do* about it, if she sets up her will, eh?"

"There are the quite easy divorce courts," said Daniel darkly.

"But there is also alimony."

"The marriage laws of our land," affirmed Daniel, "ought to be revised."

"They will be, as soon as women get the vote," said Walter. "And then——"

But Margaret, fearing the lengths to which her brother-in-law might go in this reckless mood, brought the talk abruptly to an end.

"It's a quarter to two, Daniel. You'll be late to your office. I'll have dessert brought in at once. And you know it always takes you fifteen minutes to say good-bye to the children. It feels so grand, Walter, to refer to 'the children!' In the plural! I can't yet believe or realize it! And as for Daniel—well, he's a Comic Supplement, you know, about those twins," she rattled on, keeping the talk, during the remainder of the luncheon, away from thin ice. So that at last, when Daniel rose to go away, the suspicion roused by his brother-in-law's remarks had been brushed aside and lost sight of; for the time being, at least.

## XXVII

DANIEL LEITZEL'S marriage had revealed to him a trait in himself of which he had never before been conscious, a trait which no circumstances of his life, hitherto, had roused into action; he discovered, through his love for Margaret, that he could be intensely jealous. Any least bit of her bestowed elsewhere than upon himself was sure to arouse in his heart this most painful emotion. He was jealous of her passion for books; of her friendship for Catherine Hamilton; of her devotion to the twins; and now, to-day, of her evidently chummy relation with her brother-in-law. It was, then, not only his eagerness to get down to real business with Walter Eastman that made him hurry through his office work and get home an hour earlier than usual, but it was also the uncomfortable jealousy he felt for Eastman, together with a return, during the afternoon, of the vague suspicion Eastman's rambling, enigmatical remarks at luncheon had roused in his mind, that goaded him.

The fact was that some things Walter had said, as they kept recurring to Daniel, were coming to have a sinister significance.

To his keen disappointment and chagrin, however, he found, when he got home, that neither his wife nor their guest was in the house.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Seeking out the very capable maid Margaret had succeeded in securing, he discovered her in a state of sulky indignation that would scarcely vouchsafe to him a civil or intelligible answer to his inquiries.

"Where is Mrs. Leitzel, Amanda?"

"I don't know where your wife's at. She went out with that fellah," the girl crossly replied.

"'Fellah?'" repeated Daniel, indignant in his turn at what, even in a New Munich servant, seemed very rude familiarity.

"The fellah you're eatin' and sleepin' here," elucidated Amanda.

"Did she take the twins with her?"

"No, sir, she did *not*; she left 'em in *my* charge!"

"Why, then, are you not with them?" Daniel asked in quick anxiety.

"I *was* with 'em till them two women come in here interferin'!"

"Two women? Ah, my sisters! Are they here? Where are they?"

"Out there on the porch wakin' up them two babies your wife left asleep, with me in *charge* of 'em! If them women hadn't of been two of them to one of me, they wouldn't of got the chanct to wake up them twinsees, you bet you!"

Daniel banged the kitchen door spitefully and started for his sisters, his sore and lacerated soul crying out for the sympathy, the consolation their own aggrieved spirits would offer to his wrongs and worries at the hands of a wife who, owing him everything, seemed to find her chief occupation in irritating and thwarting him.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

He found Jennie and Sadie bending solicitously over the twins, who, roused from their regular sleep, were wailing fretfully.

"Yes, Danny, no wonder your poor babies cry!" Jennie exclaimed as he appeared. "All alone out here in the cold, on a day like this yet! Yes, this is where we found 'em when we come in! This is where you can find 'em most any time!"

"We saw Margaret start out walking with a strange young man, Danny," Sadie explained, "and we come right over to see whatever had she done with these poor babies; and this is where we found them—alone out here in the cold."

"They wasn't alone, no such a thing!" Amanda shouted from the doorway whither she had followed Daniel. "I was right in here with my eye on 'em every minute, like Missus give me my orders before she went out a'ready! I'm a trustworthy person, I'd like you to know, if I *am* a poor workin' girl, and I ain't takin' no *insults*!"

"Nobody is blaming *you*," Daniel snapped back at her.

"Yes, they are, too! These here two women come in here and begun orderin' me round like as if *they* was hirin' me! I take my orders from *one* Missus, not from three!"

"We told her to bring the coach indoors and she flatly refused!" cried Jennie.

"My orders," said Amanda, folding her arms and standing at defiance, "was to leave 'em out. When Missus tells me to bring 'em in, I'll bring 'em in. Not *till*."

"Amanda," said Daniel impressively, "these ladies are



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

my sisters and when they tell you to do a thing, you must do it."

"Do they hire me and pay me my wages?"

"I hire you and pay you your wages."

"Then have I got *four* bosses yet at this here place? Not if I know it!"

"Take this coach into the house!" ordered Daniel.

"When Missus tells me to. See?"

"Danny," Sadie offered a suggestion, "leave me take the babies over to our house while their mother is away. The idea of her going off like this and leaving these poor infant twins in the care of a hired girl that she ain't had but a week and don't know anything about! Don't it beat all!"

"I'd thank you not to pass no insinuations against my moral character!" Amanda retorted. "If them twinses own mother could trust 'em to me, I guess it's nobody else's business to come in here interferin'. I wasn't told, when I took this place, that I'd be up against a bunch like *this*, tryin' to order me round and passin' *insults* at me!"

"That will do, Amanda," said Daniel with dignity. "Go out to your kitchen."

Amanda flounced away, as Sadie wheeled the baby-coach down the paved garden path to the sidewalk, followed by anxious cautions from Jennie to "go slow" and not strain her back pushing that heavy coach.

"You poor Danny!" Jennie commiserated with him as they together entered the parlour. "The way Margaret uses you, it most makes me sick! Even her hired girl she teaches to disrespect you! Ain't?"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"My life with Margaret is not exactly a 'flowery bed of ease,' " Daniel ruefully admitted.

"If only you hadn't of been so hasty to get married already, Danny! You could of done so much better than what you did!"

"But with all Margaret's faults," Daniel retorted, his pride of possession pricked by the form of Jennie's criticism, "she's the most aristocratic lady I ever met."

"Oh, well, but I don't know about that either, Danny. It seems to me she has some wonderful common ways. I never told you how one day when our hired girl was crying with a headache, Margaret went and *put her arm around her* yet and called her 'my dear,' and made her lay down till she rubbed her head for her! I told her afterward, she could be good to Emmy without making herself *that* common with her."

"And what did she say?"

"Och, she just laughed. You know how easy she can laugh. At most anything she can fetch a silly laugh."

Jennie walked into the sitting-room as she talked, inspecting Margaret's makeshift arrangements to conceal the gapes caused by the removal of the furniture which was hers and Sadie's.

"I'm awful sorry, Danny, that you'll have the expense of new furniture, when if Margaret had treated us right, we never would have left you. And the very day you can make her pass her promise that she'll act right to us, we'll be right back."

"I'll never get her to," Daniel pouted. "She's too glad you're gone."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

“‘Glad!’” echoed Jennie, horrified at the idea that her act of vengeance in her sudden departure with her things, an act so fearfully expensive and inconvenient to her and Sadie, should be affording joy to her enemy.

“She was working you all the time to *get* you to go. She’s half crazy with delight at keeping house by herself. I certainly can’t get her to promise anything that would bring you *back*.”

“Oh!” Jennie gasped, her face almost gray from her deep sense of defeat. “But look how we took all the care of housekeeping off of her! And how it saved *expense* for us to live together and——”

“She never thinks of the *expense* of anything!”

“And to think,” said Jennie, her voice choked, “she feels *glad* to put you to all that exter expense and she with not a dollar of her own! Och, Danny, I don’t know how you take it so good-natured off of her! I can’t bear to see you used so! And to think that you’ll have to spend for furniture if she keeps on being too stubborn-headed to apologize to us!”

“Well, as to the furniture, Jennie, her brother-in-law is here, and I’m going to have him ship to us the furniture that belongs to Margaret from her old home. It’s very handsome and expensive furniture. Much more expensive than I could afford to buy. It’s the handsomest furniture I ever saw.”

“But I didn’t know she had *anything*!” Jennie exclaimed in surprise.

“She has nothing but a half interest in a tumbledown old country place.”

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"And look at how lordly she wants to act to you, and to *us* yet, that have our own independent incomes!"

They had reached the dining-room in their inspection of the house, and Jennie noticed at once that the navy blue owl which for ten years had stood on the sideboard was not there.

"Oh!" she cried in a tragic voice, "is the owl broke?"

"No. Margaret won't have it on the sideboard."

"Won't have it on the sideboard! And haven't *you* something to say if that owl shall stand on the sideboard or no?"

"I told her you and Sadie wouldn't like it when you found she had taken it off."

"Danny!" Jennie said in a sepulchral tone, "mebby she's fooling you: mebby her dopplig (awkward) hired girl *broke* the owl, or either Margaret broke it herself, and is afraid to tell you. Do you *think* mebby?"

"No, it's up in the garret. She told Amanda to put it clear out of sight in the garret."

"Garret! The blue owl pitcher! But *why* don't she want it here?" Jennie demanded in mingled anger and wonder.

"Margaret don't like that owl, Jennie."

"To spite *you* does she say she don't like it and put it in the garret."

"I told her I would miss it. I'm so used to it."

"And don't she care if you want it on the sideboard setting, Danny?"

"She said she'd save up and buy me a cut-glass pitcher to take its place."



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Well, to think you haven't the dare to have your own owl on the sideboard setting when you want it, Danny! We'll see once if you can't!"

She suddenly strode to the door leading into the kitchen and pulled it open.

"Amanda, go up to the garret and fetch down the blue owl pitcher you took up there."

"When Missus sends me."

"Danny!" Jennie appealed to her brother, "do you hear the impudence she give me?"

"Amanda," Daniel commanded, stepping to the door, "go up to the garret and fetch down that blue glass pitcher as my sister tells you to do."

"Missus told me to pack it away in the garret and I done it. When she tells me to unpack it, I'll unpack it. Not till."

"Amanda," said Daniel, looking white and obstinate, "you'll go upstairs and bring down that owl, or you'll pack your things and leave this house."

"I'll leave this here house when Missus sends me! I like the place and I'm stayin' till I'm fired by *her*. Not till."

"If you're not out of here in half an hour"—Daniel took out his watch and glanced at it—"I'll send for the police and have you ejected."

Amanda glared for an instant. "Well, my goodness!" she exclaimed at length, "to think of my gettin' up against a common bunch like this here, when I thought (judgin' by Missus) that I was gettin' into a *swell* family, the kind I'm used to! All right! Suits *me* to go. I never worked

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

anyhow at a house where they kep' only one maid. I'm used to livin' with *aristocrats!*" she flung her parting shaft as she cast off her white apron, stamped out of the kitchen and upstairs to her room.

"Now," Jennie triumphed as she and Daniel went back to the sitting-room, "when Margaret comes home, she'll find out how nice it is to have no hired girl and *us* not here to cook, and her with company to supper, and the babies over at our place where *she—can't—come!*" she said with a cold-blooded incisiveness. "Mebby, after all, Danny, she will wish she had us back here to keep care of things for her."

"I'd like to know," Daniel pouted, "why she stays out so long with Walter Eastman! I came home early on purpose to talk business with him. I have several things of importance to settle up with him. I want to get through with it and see him off, for I'm in a hurry to get Margaret's furniture here, and to see what can be done with her property down there. I'm sure *I* can make it worth something. I'll get Eastman's wife to give me a mortgage on it and then I'll——"

The banging of the front door checked him. "They are back at last," he said.

"No, it's that sassy hired girl going," said Jennie with satisfaction as she glanced from the window and saw the girl departing with a heavy suit-case.

"I guess," said Daniel, "I'll have to eat my supper over at your house, Jennie, if you'll invite me. It looks as if there wouldn't *be* any supper here. Or, if there is, it will be late. And you know how I like to have my meal on time."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Of course you do. You come right along home with me, Danny, and get your nice, warm supper at the time you're used to it! Emmy's making waffles for supper this evening."

"I'll leave a note for Margaret," said Daniel, going to a desk in a corner of the room. "She might be frightened if she came in and found us all gone and no explanation."

"Leave her *be* frightened; she *needs* to worry about you, Danny!"

"Yes, but it would be bad for Daniel Junior's milk to have her get frightened."

Jennie turned away primly. The frankness of speech upon ordinarily unmentionable topics, which had seemed unavoidable since the advent of the twins, was a severe strain upon her virgin sense of propriety.

"Come on, Danny, it's five o'clock and we eat at half-past. I want for you to have your nice, hot waffles right off the stove."

As they left the house, Daniel saw, a few pavements off, Margaret and Walter coming leisurely toward home, Margaret talking with eager animation and Walter laughing in evidently keen enjoyment.

Daniel set his teeth as he whirled about and moved at his sister's side in the opposite direction.

"All right!" he determined resentfully, looking like an angry bantam, "I won't come home with the babies to-night until I'm *good and ready*."

## XXVIII

**W**HEN again, the next morning, Daniel was obliged to arise betimes and start up the fires, he felt a little regretfully that perhaps he had been a bit hasty in discharging the capable, if impertinent, Amanda.

"She was never impertinent to *me*," Margaret replied to his reason for sending away her excellent maid. "And of course she did perfectly right in refusing to take orders from Jennie that were directly contrary to mine."

"But from me?"

"But you say you told her she must obey your sisters even when that meant disobeying me. But there! I won't discuss it! Be sure, however, that I shall take steps to protect myself against an interference with my affairs that upsets my household. I shall instruct my next maid that when Jennie and Sadie appear, she's to stand by her job and 'phone for the police!"

After breakfast that morning Daniel decided that he would not depart for his office until he had "had it out" with his brother-in-law.

But Walter's ideas as to the obligations of hospitality differed rather widely from Daniel's. As a guest in Daniel's house, he could not transact the business he meant that day to put through. So he declined emphatically his



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

host's invitation to come with him to the sitting-room to "talk business."

"At your office, Mr. Leitzel."

Daniel's insistence that it suited him better to have it over right here, "without any further procrastination," did not move Walter from his persistent refusal to discuss their affairs under this roof. He felt rather sure that in any business discussion he might have with Daniel Leitzel he would be tempted to use language which a gentleman cannot use to his host. After the interview, he intended to take his suit-case and go to the Cocalico Hotel.

Arrived at Leitzel's private office (Daniel feeling not at all amiable at being forced to this second futile postponement of the adjustment which surely Eastman must realize was inevitable) Walter stretched himself out lazily in a comfortable chair by the window, lit a cigar, and waited complacently for Daniel to open up fire.

So Daniel, feeling strong in the righteousness of his cause, outlined elaborately his plan to improve Berkeley Hill and rent it for the benefit of the joint owners; or, if Walter and Harriet preferred, he would take a mortgage against Harriet's half of the estate.

Walter heard him through without a word of comment.

"I wish," Daniel finally concluded, "to begin work on the place at once to make it marketable. Can you give me the names and addresses of any reliable contractors of Charleston?"

"Plenty of them."

"Good," said Daniel, taking from his pocket a notebook and pencil. "Well?"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"But it is quite useless for you to write to a contractor," said Walter, blowing a long line of smoke from his mouth: "first, because Mrs. Eastman would not consent to mortgage away her half of Berkeley Hill; secondly, neither Margaret nor my wife would consent to such alterations as you propose, which would indeed quite ruin the place; thirdly, Margaret wishes her sister to continue to live at Berkeley Hill."

The cool effrontery of this latter made Daniel stare.

"And you," he sharply demanded, "wouldn't you feel a little more comfortable if you paid *rent* for the house you live in?"

"But why," smiled Walter, "should my 'feeling' in the matter interest *you*?"

"Bluff and impudence won't carry you through when *I'm* on the job, Eastman! You'll have to come to terms or get into trouble. We'll seize your wife's half of the estate for back rent, and then you'll have nothing, whereas as I propose to work this thing——"

"Your methods of 'working' business deals, Leitzel, are perfectly familiar to me and I prefer to have nothing to do with them."

"You prefer to continue to live in Margaret's house without in any way compensating her? Well, I warn you, I don't intend to stand for it. Since you take the stand you do, I'll make you pay rent for the past year and a half!"

"Margaret didn't tell me she had given you power of attorney over her property. I happen to know that she and my wife have a perfectly good understanding as to

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Berkeley Hill. It isn't at all necessary for you and me to discuss it."

"Oh, yes, it is, unless you want me to——"

"There is a much more important matter," Walter interposed, "that we need to discuss."

Daniel's sharp little eyes bored into his like two gimlets. "Eh? What?"

"The case of your step-mother's right to one third of her husband's estate."

"What do you mean?"

"Your wife's conscience, which you will of course think quixotic, but which I, being of her own class and kind and country, quite understand, will not permit her to live on money gotten by the defrauding of a helpless and ignorant old woman; nor will she consent to her children's inheriting such dishonest money. I must tell you this morning, Mr. Leitzel, that you and your sisters and brother must at once restore to your step-mother what is her own, or I will bring suit for her."

Daniel, though looking white, nevertheless answered quite steadily: "My step-mother is a New Mennonite; they do not sue at the law."

"But get others to sue for them."

"Did Margaret send for you to come up North for *this*?" Daniel demanded, a steel coldness in his voice and look.

"She did not send for me at all. I came to see her on quite another matter—connected with the Berkeley Hill estate."

"Indeed? But she has given you these data which you are using as blackmail, has she, as to my father's widow,

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

her religion, her rights, her wrongs, her ignorance, and so forth?"

"Margaret has not once mentioned to me your father's widow."

"Then what do you mean? How do you know Margaret objects to the source of my wealth? And what's your authority for all the rest of your bluff?"

"I know she objects to the source of your wealth because I know *her*, as you, Leitzel, could not know her if you lived with her through three lifetimes, since you are not, as I've already intimated, of her race or class or country. I learned all the facts—the *facts*, notice—as to the illegal withholding from your step-mother of her share of her husband's estate entirely through surmise."

"‘Surmise?’ You surmised them! How extraordinarily perspicuous! It's rather surprising so sharp a lawyer has not made more of a success of himself, eh?"

"Your idea of success and mine would differ as widely as does your understanding and mine of your wife. To get down to business, Mr. Leitzel, you must at once restore to your step-mother her share in her husband's estate, or we bring suit."

"‘We?’ Who?"

"I, for the old woman."

"And what," Daniel asked, his lips stiff, "do you think you are going to *get* out of this?"

"A reasonable fee."

"Margaret authorizes you to say all this to me?"

"She doesn't know I'm saying it. Has no least idea I meant to say it."



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Oh, so you are acting independently, as a counter-stroke to save yourself from being forced to pay rent for the good home you and your family enjoy?"

"I am acting independently of Margaret anyway," returned Walter, quite unruffled.

"Margaret will forbid it!"

"If I were not taking up this case with you this morning, Leitzel, Margaret would herself, I am confident, put it into the hands of another lawyer, who might not be so interested as I am in keeping it out of the newspapers. Margaret would probably bungle the thing and get herself into a mess of trouble, so I've decided I'd better do it for her and do it with a minimum of fuss and worry for her."

"She has told you she was going to put it into a lawyer's hands?"

"She has told me nothing; at least she *thinks* she has told me nothing."

"What do you mean by that—that she *thinks* she has told you nothing?"

"I've said that I've *surmised* the facts I hold."

"Well, your 'surmises' are all wrong! Margaret would not set a lawyer to bringing suit against me! She's not quite a fool! She wouldn't deliberately disgrace the father of her children!"

"She would consider, rather, her children's shame in inheriting tainted money."

"I'll have her down here"—Daniel rose suddenly, though his knees shook under him—"and put it to her, and you'll *see* whether she is loyal to her husband or not!"

"Wait!" Walter checked him. "You will have her here

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

of course if you like, but don't you think she's been subjected to about enough unpleasantness and nervous strain since yesterday afternoon? I can give you the answer she'd have for you: you will restore to your step-mother her third, or she will first institute a suit to make you do it and then (as so drastic a measure as that will make your living together rather unendurable) she will come home to Charleston with me."

"And the twins?"

"Would of course come with her."

"And *you'd* support them?" sneered Daniel.

"Margaret would be amply able to support them. She wanted to postpone telling you what it was that brought me North to see her just at this time, but I persuaded her this morning to let me tell you at once. It was this: a later will of her Uncle Osmond's has been found, in a volume of Kant's 'Critique,' giving Margaret an annual income of five thousand dollars. As the trustees of the estate had not yet begun the work of founding their free-thought college, the matter was easily adjusted. Uncle Osmond's change of heart, he states in a note, was brought about by a talk he had with Margaret one night in which he discussed his will with her and she pointed out to him that having given to him those years of her life in which a girl might prepare herself for a career, or at least for self-support, she would, if he left her dowerless, be stranded high and dry. So the old curmudgeon drew up a new will giving her a comfortable income, had it witnessed by two psychologists from two Western universities who called on him one day, stuck it into a damned old work on philos-

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

ophy that no one would ever dream of looking into except by accident, and so two years and a half passed by before it was discovered."

Under the double shock of being threatened in one moment with a lawsuit that would rob him and his sisters and brother of a large part of their income from their coal lands, and in the next moment learning the joyful news that his wife was heiress to an annual income of five thousand dollars, Daniel felt weak, almost helpless.

He rallied after a few moments sufficiently to suggest feebly that he would compromise in the case of his step-mother: give her a comfortable income for the rest of her life.

"For you see," he reasoned, "after all, the land was my own mother's, and my step-mother has no moral right to it."

"No use for you and me to discuss the *moral* values of anything, Leitzel," said Walter; "our points of view, as I've said before, being too widely different. So we'll stick to the legal aspect, please."

"Well, then, look at the matter practically. My step-mother would have no *use* for the large income she would receive from one third of the estate. Her needs are too simple. It would simply be wasted."

"That's a question for her, not for her lawyer. The more she has, the better her sons and daughters will treat her, I guess, human nature being what it is!"

"What's more," argued Daniel, "she'd be under the necessity of making a will, and at her time of life and in her state of health, that would worry and tax her, and

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

quite unnecessarily. I can settle a nice income upon her that will more than cover all her simple, modest needs."

"And hold it over her constantly that she is beholden to your generosity! Your tender consideration that she shall not be worried with the making of a will does credit to your heart! But you've let her be worried for the past decade with impending starvation or the poorhouse!"

"And you want to tell me," Daniel burst out, "that Margaret hasn't talked to you!"

"Of 'a friend' of hers 'out West.' Of course I saw right through that."

"So that," said Daniel bitterly, "was what that long letter was about that I saw her writing to you one night, when she threw dust in my eyes by saying she had 'a little surprise' for me up her sleeve!"

"Aha!" laughed Walter. "Margaret always *was* cute!"

"'Cute!' You call it 'cute,' to be underhanded with her own husband; to plot to rob her own children of a large part of their inheritance; to act in every possible way she can devise against my interests and those of my family! And don't you see," he tackled another line of argument, "that it will be extremely difficult to avert a public scandal if we actually make over to my step-mother all this money? Whereas a compromise——"

"The only rule I know for averting scandals," said Walter, "is to live honestly. Yes, it may cause comment, but not so much as a lawsuit would cause."

"You won't consider a compromise?"

"Not for an instant. Except this," Walter added,



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

lifting his hand; "we will waive a claim for the accrued profits of past years."

There was a long silence between them, Daniel nervously tapping his foot on the fender before which he sat, and Walter lounging back in his chair, looking so lazy and indifferent, it was difficult for Daniel to believe that this man held in his hands the power to force a man like himself, rich, influential, secure, to give up a large part of his annual income.

Well, there seemed to be no use in prolonging the present interview; Daniel rose slowly to bring it to an end.

"There seems nothing more to be said, Mr. Eastman."

"But I must see this thing through, Mr. Leitzel, before I return to the South, and I've got to return soon, so you must let me have my answer not later than to-morrow. That will give you time to see your brother and sisters."

"Also time to see my step-mother, who, I happen to know, will not *permit* you to bring suit. She will consent to a compromise, and an easy one."

"You think so?" Walter smiled confidently, though on this point he did not feel confident. "But whatever your step-mother may consent to, your wife will *not* consent to a compromise. She hasn't the sort of conscience that compromises. And she considers this *her* concern and her children's. I am quite sure that if you don't make full restitution to your step-mother, Margaret will go home with me, which, from what I have witnessed of her life here, I think may be the best thing she can do."

"Her life here," said Daniel coldly, "is none of your business."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

He turned away abruptly, as though unable to bear more, and walked quickly from the room.

"And from beginning to end," said Walter to himself as he yawned and stretched himself, "I was guessing! Wasn't absolutely sure that the case *was* Leitzel's step-mother's! Well," he concluded as he rose lazily and strolled out of the building, "I'm enjoying my visit up here quite a lot!"

But as he went through the streets to the Cocalico Hotel, his face was very sober.

"To think of a woman like Margaret being tied up for life to a little spider like that! Why didn't I *see* it when he came a-courting her! Ah, well," he drew a long breath, "I'll do my darndest to make it up to her! I'll see the poor old Leitzel woman myself this morning, and I'll get in *my* good strokes *there* before Dan Leitzel gets near her."

## XXIX

**A**GAIN New Munich was shaken to its foundations by another startling episode in the chronicles of the Leitzels—the resurrection, as it were, of their New Mennonite step-mother, who took up her residence in a pretty little old stone house a few doors from Daniel's gaudy mansion; the most expensive location in the town, with the trained nurse, who had taken care of Mrs. Danny Leitzel when the twins were born, established in charge of the old woman's cozy small home, as her companion and housekeeper.

"What would we do without you Leitzels to keep us interested, not to say excited?" Mrs. Ocksreider remarked to Margaret one day when she met her on the street. "I never knew they *had* a step-mother."

"She has always lived out in the country at their old home," said Margaret, "but we all thought she ought to be nearer to us now that she is getting so feeble and helpless; so we brought her in town."

"You mean *you* brought her in?"

"Mr. Leitzel and I, of course."

"Did she tell you I had called on her?" Mrs. Ocksreider inquired rather defiantly, not wholly free from an uncomfortable sense of embarrassment at the blatant curiosity that had taken her there.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"No, but I saw your card there with a number of others," said Margaret.

"You are with the old lady a great deal, aren't you? It is so nice of you!"

"I am very fond of Mrs. Leitzel," Margaret replied.

"Well, she *is* a dear," said Mrs. Ocksreider heartily; "one of the sweetest little women I ever met. How prettily and cozily you have fixed up her house! She told me you had done it all!"

"I did enjoy getting her settled near me," Margaret smiled. "She's the greatest comfort and blessing to me—to *any* one who has the good fortune to come into contact with her. I have known few people in my life so guileless, so kindly disposed toward every one! The world needs more of such souls, doesn't it, as a little leaven in the hardness and sordidness all about us?"

"Indeed we do!" Mrs. Ocksreider piously agreed. "And the dear old lady is equally fond of you, my dear," she assured Margaret, patting her arm. "She seems so *grateful* to you," she added, putting out a feeler.

"Yes?" said Margaret noncommittally.

"I see Miss Jennie and Miss Sadie going in to see her very often, too," said Mrs. Ocksreider tentatively.

"Oh, yes, every day. They are very attentive to their mother," Margaret replied quite soberly.

"Are they so fond of her, too?" Mrs. Ocksreider asked, curiosity fairly radiating from her ample countenance. "I had never in all these years of my acquaintance with them heard them so much as refer to their step-mother."

"But you were never more than very formally ac-



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

quainted with them," Margaret returned in a tone of dismissing the discussion. "Has Miss Ocksreider got back from New York?"

"No, I expect her to-night. Come in to see her, Mrs. Leitzel—she adores you! And so few of us see anything of you at all since your babies came. You don't go anywhere any more, do you? Society certainly does miss you."

"You are very kind to say that. I am very much tied down, of course."

"If you could get a good, capable nurse," suggested Mrs. Ocksreider, again tentatively. Margaret did not know that the town was agog at the fact, that, rich as Danny Leitzel was, his wife kept no child's nurse for her babies.

"I am trying to get one, Mrs. Ocksreider."

"If I hear of one, I'll send her to you. Of course you were at the luncheon yesterday, however? *Every* one was at *that*."

"What luncheon?" asked Margaret vaguely.

"*What* luncheon? She asks what luncheon!" exclaimed Mrs. Ocksreider, casting up her eyes in horror. "The Missionary Jubilee Luncheon of course!"

"Oh!" cried Margaret, blushing, for this Missionary Jubilee Luncheon had been an orgy of religious sentimentality in which the entire town had united and nothing else had been talked of for weeks. "I had forgotten all about it. I wasn't out of the house yesterday," she added apologetically.

"But didn't Miss Jennie and Miss Sadie tell you? I remember seeing *them* in the throngs."

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"They didn't speak of it," replied Margaret, not adding the information for which Mrs. Ocksreider yearned, that they did not, these days, tell her anything, since they "did not speak as they passed by."

"But Mrs. Leitzel," pursued Mrs. Ocksreider, "how *could* you 'forget' a thing like our Missionary Jubilee, unless you were deaf, dumb, and blind?"

"Miss Hamilton never spoke of it to me, and I don't see many other people. The truth is," Margaret owned up, "she and I were not specially interested in it."

"Oh! Why not?"

"Well, I'm inclined to think that the so-called 'heathen' religions are, in most cases, as good as, or better than, the substitute offered by the half-educated missionaries."

"'Half-educated!' Oh, but our missionaries are not half-educated, Mrs. Leitzel!" exclaimed Mrs. Ocksreider, shocked. "Do you know, sometimes I think you are not religious! And one of the women missionaries said yesterday that a woman without religion was like a flower without fragrance, or a landscape without atmosphere."

"Epigrammatic," nodded Margaret, undisturbed. "I doubt whether she thought that up herself."

"Oh, but she was a beautiful speaker! I only just wish you had heard her! You believe at least in a Supreme Being, don't you, Mrs. Leitzel?"

The absurdity of such discussion on the sidewalk was too much for Margaret's gravity and she helplessly laughed. But Mrs. Ocksreider looked so grieved over her that she sobered up and answered, "I hope I have a religion."

"What *is* your religion, Mrs. Leitzel?"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Well, I have ideals. Any one with ideals is religious."

"Is *that* all the religion you have?"

"It's more than I can manage to live up to, and we'd better not have *very* much more religion than we can live out, do you think so?"

This was rather too deep water for Mrs. Ocksreider and she changed the subject. "Oh, well, every one has to settle these questions her own way. I should think," she quickly added, evidently not willing to miss her chance of clearing up a matter that was in her mind, "that Miss Jennie and Miss Sadie would be rather jealous of their mother's devotion to you. She talks so much of you and she never speaks of them."

"I'm new, you see," said Margaret, starting to move on as she felt the ice getting thin. How these New Munich women could pry! "Good-bye," she nodded as she hurried away before she could be further sounded.

"I don't wonder, though," she thought on her way home, "that people are curious and suspicious. How Jennie and Sadie can have the face, after years of cruel neglect of their mother, to lavish upon her, now that she has a fortune to will away, such obsequious and constant attention and devotion—oh, it's nauseating! And their mother isn't a fool; she is not taken in by it for one minute, I can see that."

It was only that morning that, when she had run in to see Mrs. Leitzel for a minute, she had found her just concluding a strictly private interview with her New Mennonite preacher and a young lawyer of the town whom Margaret knew by sight.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"Don't tell Danny what you seen here, my dear, will you?" the old woman nervously asked when they were alone. "Danny would take it hard that I got another lawyer to tend to my business. But you see, Margaret, I have afraid Danny would lawyer my money all off of me if he got at it."

"I'll not say a word to him," Margaret had reassured her.

"Jennie and Sadie, and Hiram when he comes to see me, now, once a week, worries me so to make my will," she continued in a distressed voice. "Hiram he tells me Danny's got so much more'n what he has and you got more'n what his Lizzie has, so I had ought to leave what I got to *his* children. And Jennie and Sadie says they can't hardly get along since they had to give up so much to me and I had ought to leave it to them when I die, because Danny's got a-plenty to do with a'ready and a rich wife yet, and Hiram lives so tight he don't *need* more'n what he's got. 'And, anyway,' Jennie says to me, 'of course I and Sadie would will all *we* had to Danny's and Hiram's children. You could even make your will so's we'd *have* to, Mom.' And then Danny he comes in and he says, 'You know, mother, it was my wife that has been so kind and generous to you, persuading us all that even if the coal lands did belong, in the first place, to my own mother, we ought to give you your share. It was *Margaret* that wouldn't leave us put you in a home, where Hiram and Jennie and Sadie were all for puttin' you. And I listened on Margaret, mother, and wouldn't do it; so I don't think it would be more'n right for you to leave your



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

share of my mother's estate to *me*, seeing that it was through my wife that you got any of it.' Well, Margaret, they all kep' worryin' me so that now to-day I did make my will oncet. Now I can say to 'em when they ast me about it, that my will is made a'ready."

"It is too bad that you should be worried about it so!" said Margaret sympathetically.

"Even Hiram's Lizzie comes to see me and asks me about my will, for all I think it's Hiram puts her up to it; she don't *want* to do it. I took notice a'ready, my dear, you are the only one of 'em all that never spoke nothin' to me yet how I was a-goin' to will away my money."

"We have more interesting things to talk about, haven't we? I've run in this morning to tell you that Mary Louise has beat Sonny cutting teeth—she has *two*, and he hasn't one, the lazy fellow! I'll wager, grossmutter, she'll keep ahead of him straight through life!"

"But Sonny's anyhow fatter'n sister," maintained the proud grandmother, between whom and Margaret there was kept up a constant play of favouritism as to the babies.

"Jennie says I'm letting Sonny get too fat and that it's dreadfully unwholesome."

"Sonny *ain't* too fat!" the jealous grandmother retorted indignantly; "he's wery *neat*!"

"If he would only draw the line at being 'neat,' but he's getting a tummy like an alderman's!" Margaret anxiously declared.

They laughed together over the joke and the old woman looked up fondly into the bright, sweet face at her side.

"You always cheer me up, dearie, when you come.

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

The others never talk to me about *nothin'* except how I'm a-goin' to make my will, and how I'm spendin' so much of my income, and how extravagant *you* fitted up this house for me with money that was rightly *theirn*; and oh, my dear, I got so tired of hearin' about the money off of 'em! The only other thing they ever want to talk about——"

She stopped short and closed her lips.

"Is the wicked, designing Jezebel that Danny has for a wife! Oh, yes, I know. It's too bad, my dear, that they should fret you so! But perhaps now that you can tell them your will is made, they'll stop teasing you. I'm going to bring the babies in to see you this afternoon. I must run along now; I have to go downtown and get Sonny some new booties; he chewed up the last pair and they didn't agree with him."

Again the old woman laughed delightedly. Margaret could not realize what a refreshment and comfort she was to her.

"But before you go, Margaret, I want to ast you what Hiram means by this here postal card I got off of him this morning in the mail."

Margaret took the card offered to her and read:

"D. V. will come to see you Saturday to read the Scriptures with you and have prayer with you.

"In haste, your affectionate son,

"REV. HIRAM LEITZEL."

"I don't know who this D. V. *is* that's coming," said Mrs. Leitzel anxiously. "Do you, my dear? And I

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

haven't the dare to hear religious services with a world's preacher; it's against the rules of meeting."

"‘D. V.’ stands for two Latin words, ‘*Deo volente*,’ ‘God willing.’ Hiram means *he* will be here, God willing. I hope for your sake, God won't be willing!"

"Oh, but ain't you and Hiram got the grand education!" exclaimed Mrs. Leitzel admiringly. "Well, if he does come, I can't leave him have no religious services with me. Us New Mennonites, you know, we darsent listen to no other preachers but our own, though I often did wish a'ready I *could* hear one of Hiram's grand sermons. They do say he can stand on the pulpit just elegant!"

Margaret kissed her, without comment upon Hiram's greatness as a preacher, and came away.

She was sincerely sorry that Daniel's sisters must, in the nature of things, continue to regard her with bitter antagonism. She could have borne it with perfect resignation if circumstances had not constantly brought them together, for Jennie and Sadie came almost daily to her home to see after their brother's little comforts and to fondle his precious babies for an hour, though they never in their visits deigned to recognize Margaret's existence. They would sail past her in her own front hall, without speaking to her, and go straight to the nursery, or to Daniel in his "den."

Having been the means of depriving them of some of their income, she was unwilling to take from them, also, the pleasure they had in the babies; so beyond a mild suggestion to Daniel that he might tell them they must treat her with decent courtesy in her own home, or else

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

stay away from it, she did not interfere with their visits, though she tried to keep out of their way when they did come.

Daniel, on his part, was aghast at the bare suggestion of further endangering his children's inheritance by telling his sisters they must be civil to his wife in her own home or stay away. He considered Margaret's sense of values to be hopelessly distorted.

It was not surprising that Margaret and old Mrs. Leitzel turned with infinite relief from the society of the rest of the Leitzels to find in each other an escape from a materialism as deadly to the soul's true life as ashes to the palate. It was of the babies they talked mainly: of their cunning ways; of Margaret's plans and ambitions for them; of the new clothes she was making for them; of Daniel's devotion to and pride in them.

Mrs. Leitzel also heard with delighted interest Margaret's anecdotes of her sister's children: how little Walter had called up the family doctor on the telephone to ask whether when you got chicken-pox you got feathers, and the doctor had said, "Not only feathers, but you crow every morning," and now little Walter prayed every night that he might soon have chicken-pox; also, how three-year-old Margaret, after an operation for a swollen gland in her neck, had informed some visitors, "I had an operation on my neck and the doctors cut it out."

Mrs. Leitzel, in her turn, would relate to her by the hour anecdotes of her past life, some of which proved very illuminating to Margaret as to the Leitzel characteristics, and gave her much food for thought.



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

“I used to have so afraid to be all alone—I can’t tell you what it is to me to feel so safe like what I do now, with this here kind Miss Wenreich takin’ care of me; and not bein’ afraid to take a second cup of tea when I feel fur it; because *now* when my tea is all, I kin buy more; and havin’ no fear of freezin’ to death if my wood gets all fur me and I not able to go out and chop more; and not being forced any more to eat *only* just what would keep me alive. To have now full and plenty and to feel safe and at peace—and to have you to love me! And the dear babies!

“One day, my dear, sich a sharper come to my house out there in the country and he says, ‘Where’s your husband at?’ Well, he looked so wicked (fur all, he was nice dressed) that I didn’t say to him, ‘I’m a widow, my husband ain’t livin’!’ I had so afraid if he knowed I was alone, he might do me somepin. So I sayed, ‘You kin tell me your business, I’m the same as Mister.’ ‘*You* run things and handle the money, do you?’ he ast me. ‘Well, then, I want you to give some fur to buy Bibles fur the poor.’ I said I didn’t have no money to spare, but I had an exter Bible I could give him. I knowed well enough he was a sharper, but I thought mebby my old Bible might do him some good. So I offered it to him. But he said the Lord didn’t want no second-hand stuff fur His poor. ‘You’re not a Christian,’ he said, ‘if you won’t give any to buy *new* Bibles fur the poor.’ And Margaret, he looked so ugly, I had so afraid of him, I shook all over; but I purtended to call Mister, and him dead near twenty years. Well, but at that, the sharper took hisself off! Goodness knows what he might of done at me if I hadn’t of

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

purtended to call Mister! Ain't? Well," she drew a long sigh, "them worryin' days is all over now, thanks to you, my dear. It's as Danny says: I'd be in the poor-house if it hadn't of been fur you."

Margaret often marvelled, as she found herself deriving the keenest pleasure from old Mrs. Leitzel's happiness and deep content, how the Leitzels could so blindly miss, in their selfish materialism, the true sources of joy in life.

### XXX

**W**HEN a year after she had moved into town old Mrs. Leitzel died, it was Margaret's private conviction that the Leitzels had worried her to death trying to find out how she had made her will. It is said that people of mild temper are usually obstinate, and the fact stands that no one of them ever succeeded in getting from the old woman the least hint as to the disposition she had made of her large property.

"She would tell *you*," Daniel used to urge Margaret to find out the coveted secret.

"But I don't care to know."

"I do. Find out for *me*."

"Not for any consideration on earth or in heaven, my dear, would I lift my finger about a matter which is so absolutely Mrs. Leitzel's own private and personal concern and no one else's."

The suspense and impatience with which, after her death, they awaited the reading of the will, seemed to let loose every primitive animal instinct of covetousness, and scarcely could they restrain, within decent bounds, their fierce suspicions of each other and their hawklike greed for the prey at stake.

When it was found that after a bequest to the New Mennonite denomination, and one to the nurse, Miss

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

Wenreich, the entire remainder of the fortune of the deceased was left unconditionally to Margaret, the sensations and sentiments of the Leitzels were dynamic. Even Daniel was more chagrined than pleased. An economically independent wife, he had already found, was not the sort of whom Petruchio (who expressed Daniel's idea exactly) could have said:

"I will be master of what is mine own:  
She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house,  
My household stuff, my field, my barn,  
My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything;  
And here she stands, touch her whoever dares."

One couldn't maintain the Petruchio attitude, which was certainly the true and orderly one, toward a wife who had a large income of her own and was strangely lacking in a proper respect for her husband.

It was not until Daniel discovered that Margaret had scruples about accepting the money that he found himself as fearful lest it should pass out of his family into the hands of strangers as he had hitherto been eager to get it into his own hands. The pious and solemn arguments he employed to convince her of her duty in the matter, far from having any weight with her, rather confirmed her in her feeling that, having forced the Leitzels to give up a third of their possessions to their step-mother, it put her too much in the light of a self-interested plotter to have the money come round eventually to her.

It was, however, Catherine Hamilton who convinced her that she could justly keep it.



## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

It was a trial to Catherine to be obliged, when speaking of the Leitzels to Margaret, always to curb her tongue to a hypocritical form of respect for them; for Margaret would not countenance any reflections upon them. So Catherine's remarks, in the present instance, though clearly conveying her meaning, were veiled.

"Do you think, Margaret, that the Leitzels, *for their own spiritual discipline*, ought to lose or get that money? Was old Mrs. Leitzel wise or wrong in willing it away from them? Will you be wronging or helping their immortal souls—if they have any," Catherine ventured rather fearfully to add, "if you give it back to them? Another thing: you have already learned enough about married life to know that only in economic independence can a woman have any moral or spiritual freedom; can she be a personality in herself, distinct from her husband's. With all this money of your own, you will be free to control the education of your children as you could not if your husband's money had to pay for their education. Of course, in most cases, I suppose mothers and fathers have no difficulty in agreeing perfectly about their children's education; but when they differ radically, what a boon to a conscientious mother to have means at her command to do for her children what she thinks essential for their welfare in life! My dear, it's the solution of the whole confounded 'woman movement' that women shall be freed from an economic slavery which balks their efficiency as mothers, as citizens, and even as wives. Also, with all this money of your own, think what you can do to help me capitalize and organize my ideal school for girls! Why, I can begin next week!"

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

"And we *will* begin next week! I've thought of another thing: I can now use the money Uncle Osmond left me to help educate Hattie's children. She and Walter are the sort that will never be affluent. They care too little about money ever to acquire any."

"And you can have an automobile of your own in which you will now and then take my mother out for an airing to her great benefit!" added Catherine.

"It shall be at her disposal," declared Margaret.

Another thing had occurred to her while Catherine had been speaking: Daniel, she knew, would never allow her a just portion of his wealth for the upkeep of their home and the rearing of their children. Every dollar of his that she spent would have to be discussed and argued about. This fortune which Mrs. Leitzel had left to her was really only her fair share in her husband's possessions, which she could use freely and quite independently of him.

When once she was convinced that she was justified in keeping the money, the frenzied raging of the Leitzels affected her not at all, though Hiram's fury and agony carried him to the length of telling her to her face that she was stealing the money (his own mother's money) from *his* children to give it to her own son and daughter.

As for Daniel, his chagrin over his step-mother's will swung round, in the end, to a chuckling glee over his wife's cleverness.

"After all, Margaret, you do have some business ability! I declare you outwitted us all with the cute way you managed to get things into your own hands! That wasn't

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

a bad deal, my dear, not at all a bad deal, and I shouldn't have supposed it was *in* you! You seemed to care so little for money! And to think that all the while you were working such a clever scheme as this! Well, I knew when I decided to marry you that you weren't stupid. I trust that Daniel Junior will inherit the joint business acumen of his mother and father. He'll be some business man if he does, won't he?"

"God forbid!" was Margaret's reply, which Daniel thought quite idiotically irrelevant. But he was ceasing to try to understand what seemed to him his wife's unexplainable inconsistencies.

He even came, in time, to submit, without fretting, to Margaret's ideas of running a household; finding her innovations, which had at first seemed to him madly extravagant, to be as necessary to his comfort and convenience as to hers. But he never did get so used to them as to cease to feel an immense pride in what Jennie and Sadie called "Margaret's tony ways." He always covertly watched the faces of guests in his home (for they had guests now) to note wonder and admiration at the elegance of its appointments, the formal service at meals, the dainty tea table brought into the parlour every day at five, and the many other fastidious trifles introduced into their daily life.

It is to be noted that though the intimacy of Catherine and Margaret continued throughout their lives, Catherine never once found courage to put to her friend and confidante the question to which she could not, in her knowledge of Margaret's character, find any answer: "What

## HER HUSBAND'S PURSE

in the world was it that ever induced you to marry Daniel Leitzel?"

It was only through motherhood, which was to Margare her religion, that she learned, among other great lessons, how mistaken she had been in selling herself for a home. And the paramount ideal which she always held up to her boy and girl, as being the foundation of everything that was worth while in life, was the highest conception of mated love which she could possibly give them.

THE END



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